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THE BABY IS PASSED BACK

THE unanimity of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine is the common denominator of defeat. The Committee—and who can blame it?—has found no royal road to the solution of the twin problems remitted to it—the distress of the Jews in Europe and the position of Jews in Palestine. As an immediate measure of relief it makes a recommendation which the British Government should immediately and unequivocally accept: that arrangements should be made for the immediate immigration into Palestine of 100,000 Jews from Europe. This will at least empty of their present pitiful occupants the "displaced" Jewish camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. But the figure of Jews likely to desire to emigrate from Europe is put by the Committee at 500,000 out of a surviving total of slightly over four millions, of whom a tenth are classed as "refugee" and "displaced." The Committee has little hope that homes outside Europe can be found for all, or indeed many, of these would-be emigrants. It calls, therefore, on all the Governments concerned to assist the Jews to rebuild their shattered communities on the Continent by enforcing guaranteed civil liberties and equal rights, and by enacting restitution of confiscated Jewish property.

As for the future of Palestine itself, the Committee takes refuge in an affirmation that its peculiar status as a Holy Land "dedicates it to the precepts and practices of the Brotherhood of Man, not those of narrow nationalism." The Jewish National Home is to remain in Palestine, but Palestine is to be neither a Jewish State nor an Arab State. With its present explosive mixture of antagonistic nationalities, it is not ripe for independence; and, pending transfer to United Nations' trusteeship, Britain must continue to exercise the Mandate conferred by the old League. The immediate grant of 100,000 entry certificates does not represent finality; but the Committee confesses its inability to "construct a yardstick" for future annual immigration of Jews. The Mandatory Power must do its best to interpret its obligation to "facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced." Rejecting partition, the Committee recognises that the absorptive capacity of Palestine will depend on raising the living standard of Jews and Arabs alike. It recommends that the Land Transfer Regulations of 1940, which prohibited or restricted sales of land to non-Arab purchasers in certain zones, should be repealed as "discriminatory"; and it gives a vague blessing to plans for large-scale agricultural and industrial development in Palestine, provided there is a guarantee, not merely of peace in Palestine, but of the willing co-operation of adjacent Arab States. But surely, since it is agreed that the future of both Jews and Arabs depends on such development, the Mandatory Power must face and overcome political difficulties. Otherwise we are caught in a vicious circle, saying that there can be no peace without economic betterment and no betterment without peace.

Such action would, of course, involve the assumption by the United States of a share, at least financial, in the responsibility for Palestinian development, and there is no hint in the Committee's Report of American willingness to shoulder any part of the burden. The baby, in fact, is passed neatly back to Britain. The British Government is left in the invidious position of having to decide how far to implement a Report which does not satisfy Zionist aspirations but which will cause among the Arab community serious apprehension lest the door, which they thought had been closed by the White Paper of 1939, is being reopened to unlimited Jewish immigration. That the 100,000 immediate entry certificates should be granted, we have no doubt. This is required in the name of common humanity. In his preliminary statement in the House on Wednesday, the Prime Minister seemed to suggest that action by way of immediate relief could not be undertaken in isolation from the rest of the Report's recommendations, and large-scale entries of Jews to Palestine in 1946 must be dependent both on the result of discussions he was initiating with the U.S.A. and on the disbandment of all illegal Palestinian "armies." This is cold comfort for the unhappy refugees in Europe; but we agree with Mr. Attlee that the task of finding a long-term solution to a problem which has baffled the Committee is not one which the British Government can fairly be asked, as the Committee asks it, to undertake unaided. The sooner Palestine passes into Uno Trusteeship, the better.

Progress at Paris

So far, the four Foreign Ministers' voyage on the stormy seas of treaty-making has been attended, contrary to expectations, by few incidents. The ship is still far from port; but, in so far as he has his hand on the helm, Mr. Molotov appears to be bent on steering it away from the obvious rocks. Cynics have suggested that his motive may be a desire to give the French Right no excuse for charging Russian Communism with wrecking tactics until the referendum on the French Constitution is over. However that may be, the Russian delegate has been more conciliatory than was expected. He agreed without demur that France should take part in the discussion of the Balkan treaties; he did not maintain the previous claim of the Soviet Union to one-third of the Italian fleet; he now proposes, not sole Soviet trusteeship over Tripolitania, but simply that there should be a Soviet administrator (with an Italian deputy) under an international trusteeship, with an advisory commission representing the other three Powers; and, subject to "certain considerations," not yet defined, he offered no objection in principle to the cession of the Dodecanese to Greece. All this, of course, does not mean that the Conference is yet on the way to reaching a comprehensive agreement. Apart from the fact that the Soviet delegation declares that it is not yet ready to discuss the problem of Austria and shows no signs of eagerness to join in discussions of the long-term future of Germany, there is still plenty of room for dispute over the Italian Treaty—notably the Trieste frontier, for which the four "experts" have proposed four lines. Moreover, the fate of the Italian colonies has yet to be settled. Mr. Bevin, stressing British pledges to the Senussi, proposes that independence should be accorded to a United Lybia, embracing both Cyrenaica and Tripoli-

tania. This proposal may be criticised by Mr. Molotov as an attempt to create another British protectorate on Transjordan lines; and it is by no means certain that it will secure support from the United States, whose delegation favours a collective trusteeship, while M. Bidault, for France, has renewed his thesis that Italy should be given the administration of trusteeship over her own colonies under United Nations' supervision.

Richesse Oblige

Morally indebted to a hungry world from whose convulsions she has emerged victorious and wealthy, America can scarcely be said to be living up to her obligations. The public in the United States can no longer retort to Mr. Truman's appeal to save food by arguing that Britain is doing nothing. Though conditions here were already pinched by comparison with the unrationed abundance of the United States, the British Government is not merely advancing 200,000 tons of wheat from the British "pipeline" to hard-pressed countries, but has ordered a smaller, dearer loaf and a cut of 15 per cent. in the volume of barley available for brewing. It may be arguable that even this step will not be sufficient, and that bread rationing (with all its troublesome complexities) will have to be instituted in this country. The fact remains that the British contribution towards meeting the food crisis can at best be relatively small. The marked deterioration in the world food position which has taken place this month is due, first and foremost, to the failure of President Truman's food policy. American shipments of wheat in April will fall lamentably short of the promised target of one million tons, and the outlook for the critical months of May and June is alarming. Neither the cut in millers' intake nor the bonus on quick sales offered to farmers is bringing a sufficiency of wheat to the ports. The House of Representatives having successfully hamstrung the Office of Price Administration, private enterprise in the United States is launched upon a profitable free-for-all scramble, in which foodstuffs as well as other commodities are naturally included. While Asia and Europe starve, American farmers and food racketeers are merrily extracting the last ounce of profit from their country's refusal to have a controlled economy.

Compromise On Spain

It was always obvious that, in view of the attitude of Britain and the United States, the Security Council would be unable to agree on any resolution with "teeth" in it relating to the Franco regime in Spain. In abstaining from voting against the amended resolution which was originally put forward by Australia, Mr. Gromyko may be regarded as having acquiesced in the inevitable; moreover, rather than have no agreement at all, it was certainly better that the Council should pass a resolution which did at least record its "unanimous moral condemnation" of the Spanish regime. This said, the operative effect of the Australian resolution, which calls for the appointment of a Committee to inquire whether the existence of the Franco Government constitutes, in fact, a threat to international peace and security, is disagreeably reminiscent of the devices whereby the old Non-intervention Committee avoided taking any positive action in support of the legitimate Republican Government. If the U.S. State Department releases its massive Intelligence dossier on German activities in Spain, the Committee should be in no lack of material for its report to the Council. But does it really call for further inquiry to establish the fact that Franco, who sent the Blue Division to Russia, was a non-belligerent ally of the Axis, and that Spain is now the refuge and breeding ground for Fascism in Europe? The British and American delegates on the Security Council had no answer to Mr. Gromyko's charges that their policy was tantamount to appeasement of Franco. It is of course perfectly clear that the British and American Governments dislike the Franco regime; they would doubtless prefer to see Franco replaced by a "reliable" constitutional Government which would be supported by the Generals and "stable" elements in Spain, including the industrials as well as Right-wing and Centre Republicans. But this would not be the Government of Señor Giral. To install such a Government in Spain would mean overcoming the resistance of the Army and providing the armed force to bring about in Spain a definite victory of the Left.

German Fusion and the Allies

The Allied Control Council or, failing agreement on its part, a still more august authority will have to resolve the deadlock which has arisen in the Four-Power Kommandatura in Berlin as a result of the refusal by the British, Americans and French to recognise the new Socialist Unity Party in the capital. The Unity Party is clearly forcing the pace: it is already functioning vigorously in Berlin and producing its own newspaper. The Western Allies have, of course, the legal right to refuse recognition to the new party or to any other German party; and they had good grounds for objecting to the methods used by the Russians to persuade some of the Social-Democratic branches to accept fusion. But the British authorities have gone much farther than merely refusing British recognition to the new fusion party. Military Government has issued a statement warning the German people that the twenty-seven Labour M.P.s and the numerous leading trade union officials who sent a message in favour of fusion to the Social-Democratic Conference were "unrepresentative"; and have ordained that the seven Communists and seven Social-Democrats elected to the new Party's Executive Committee from the British Zone must resign. In this latter step the British lead was significantly not followed by the Americans. Dr. Schumacher and the anti-fusionist Social-Democrats in the West are clearly under the impression that they will receive British support in fighting to the last against amalgamation with the Communist Party. If British support for Social-Democracy is not accompanied by a very swift and positive policy of Socialism in the West, its effect will be to make all German Social-Democrats, whose Socialist programme is identical with that of the Communists, look like British "stooges" who cannot even deliver the goods. That would be the quickest way to discredit Social-Democracy and to make Germans with any vitality left turn to the extremes of Communism or Nazism. The British would then find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being faced with a Social Democratic party split from head to bottom on the issue of fusion and of drifting into support, if not of dubious Right-wing groups now forming in Westphalia, at least of Christian Democrats (who have polled heavily in local elections in the U.S. Zone), and into whose ranks Right-wing Social Democrats and old-time Nationalists are infiltrating.

The Scene Shifts To Simla

The process of sounding Indian opinion is over: the British Cabinet Mission, accompanied by the Viceroy, has now moved to Simla for a round table conference in which a definite attempt will be made to secure agreement on the broad outlines of the future constitution. According to press reports from New Delhi, the British Ministers intend to put forward a plan of their own as a basis for discussion. This plan is said to contemplate the creation of an all-Indian federal Centre, whose powers would be limited to the three subjects of foreign affairs, defence and communications. The next "layer" in the federal structure would be two Sub-federations consisting, one, of predominantly Hindu, and the other of predominantly Moslem provinces. In these Sub-federations the Indian States would presumably be included. At the bottom level would be the Provinces, in whose administrations all sovereign rights not delegated to the Centre or the Sub-federation would be vested. Without a more complete picture of details, and in particular of the subjects to be assigned to the Sub-federations, it is difficult to form a considered judgment on a plan which, on the face of it, is both complex and ingenious. Neither Congress nor the Moslem League has yet expressed its views. But it is at least a step forward that the Ministers should have succeeded in bringing all parties together round a conference table.

Houses—and Mr. Churchill

At the end of March, the total of houses completed since last July, for Great Britain as a whole, had still only just topped 30,000; and of these about 23,000 were temporary houses and huts. In other words, the supply of finished houses was still the merest trickle. In addition, it is true, nearly 100,000 seriously damaged and unoccupied houses had been refitted for habitation; and over 84,000 houses, including temporary dwellings, were reported as under construction. There are signs that things are just beginning to move; but even now local authorities, on which the housing drive is bound mainly to depend, seem extraordinarily slow in getting off the mark. According to the March figures, they were responsible, in England and Wales, for about 32,000 out of 52,000 permanent houses under construction. In order to put these figures into the right perspective, it has to be borne in mind that in the 1930's houses were being built in Great Britain at the rate of 350,000 to 360,000 a year. Mr. Churchill, in his Edinburgh speech on Monday, said that the "first cause" of the housing shortage is "the pedantic, irrational enforcement of Socialistic prejudice"—by which he presumably meant to imply that, if private building speculators had been given their heads, the shortage would have been well on the way to being cured. This he must know to be the veriest nonsense. Nor was it less nonsensical to cite as the "second cause" that "the Socialist Ministers . . . forgot the bricks." It was not a Socialist who was in charge at the Ministry of Works when the bricks were forgotten—far from it. It is not the present Government's fault that it has been forced to bring back soldiers to work, as soldiers, in the brickyards—an expedient which its sponsors must cordially dislike—in order to help reduce the shortage. Nor can the slowness of the local authorities be laid at Socialism's door—for most of them are still controlled by anti-Socialists, and still more were so controlled until the last few months. The housing shortage is very bad; but it is sheer effrontery for Mr. Churchill to pretend that the Tories would have prevented it, or indeed that they are not mainly responsible for the want of preparation for tackling it now.

Fair Wages and Conditions

The new Fair Wages Clause agreed upon by representatives of the Trade Unions and the employers in 1942 is due to come before Parliament for adoption almost at once. Its operation was postponed by agreement until after the war when its terms were laid down four years ago; but now there is good reason for bringing it into operation as soon as may be. It is much wider in its application and also a good deal stricter than the old Fair Wages Clause adopted by Parliament in 1909; and, like its predecessor, it is likely to be widely adopted by local authorities in respect of their own contracts. Presumably it will also be made binding on public and semi-public corporations, such as the Central Electricity Board and the Port of London Authority. One respect in which the new Clause differs from the old is in imposing a ban on any employer who refuses to allow his employees to join Trade Unions. The new Clause also prescribes fair conditions of employment as well as fair wages, and covers clerical and technical as well as manual workers. It applies to all employees of the firms working on public contracts, and not merely to the workers

engaged on the work in question; and it extends to sub-contractors as well as to main contractors. In effect, its terms register the almost accomplished fact of general recognition of collective bargaining and its results by all firms which set out to do business with the State—and that, if the local authorities follow suit, goes a pretty long way in these days.

British Films

The annual conference of the Association of Ciné Technicians was fully justified in criticising the excessive expenditure of time, money, materials and studio space on Pascal's *Cæsar and Cleopatra*. For the two years it was in the making, it obstructed the production of at least half a dozen medium-priced films, each of which might have had something to say and been as attractive in the home market. The British film industry cannot match the extravagant escapism of Hollywood, and attempts to do so can only result in a distortion both of the national idiom that has at last emerged and of the technical and financial structure of the industry. The Association's demand for action from the Board of Trade to secure a minimum production of two hundred British feature films a year may not secure immediate results. But it is no use taking steps to curtail imports of American films unless sufficient British films are being made to meet domestic requirements. And, as far as style and content are concerned, steps must be taken to limit or prevent the establishment of American studios in this country. It would be folly to allow Hollywood stars and producers to corrupt the virility which is now typical of the best British films. But that is what happens when monopoly at home is supported in an attempt to crash foreign markets. The Association rightly called for an enquiry into the growth of monopoly in children's and educational films. The latter, especially, are properly the concern of the Ministry of Education.

Atomic Energy

The Government's Bill to put all development of atomic materials under strict State control and public ownership is a nationalisation measure on which there will be no dispute—provided it is the first step to internationalisation and Uno control. Nor will there be any dispute about it being under the control of civilians and not of the Services. The American Senate Committee has come to the same determination after months of bitter struggle by the Services to "grab the atom"; five full-time civilians will form the U.S. Atomic Commission. Lord Portal of Hungerford, former Chief of the Air Staff, is already at the Ministry of Supply in charge of the production of "fissile materials," but it is very much in a civilian capacity. There will be, in addition to the Research and Development Station at Didcot, Oxfordshire, two more nuclear-energy plants at Risley and Springfield in Lancashire, and there may be more. The research development will be mainly with the study of nuclear energy for industrial uses (always bearing in mind, of course, that the undoctored raw material for atomic energies is also the explosive charge for atomic bombs). This ambivalence makes it all the more urgent for the nations to reach agreement about the Atomic Development Authority, proposed by the U.S. State Department Committee, which seeks to put all uranium mining and all basic production plants under international control. Under that dispensation Didcot, Risley, Springfield and any other centres would be international enclaves. Their discoveries and products would be leased out for industrial purposes in the form of atomic "piles" or "engines" in which the fissile material would be treated in such a way as to prevent its being incorporated in bombs while still being effective for the production of industrial energy. It can be assumed that the Government's move is not a manifestation of national competition but a contribution to the advancement of atomic energy on international lines.

PARLIAMENT: Health Bill

Wednesday

Members returned from their ten-day holiday on Tuesday looking bronzed and fit. The scene in the dining-rooms and smoking-rooms resembled a station platform on the first day of the school term. There was feverish bonhomie and the rather forced atmosphere of corporate jollity. Some Members had been investigating conditions of living in the British Zone of Germany, others in unrationed Dublin. Some had been attending meetings in their constituencies, others at Hurst Park. Vernon (Dulwich), the current darling of the popular press for his personal experiments with starvation diets, was being keenly scrutinised by Members and pointed out to the public. To Phineas's genial eye his ample, but not excessive, curves appeared to have lost little of their substance. Even the Chancellor's gleaming scalp was a pleasant shade of chestnut.

Superimposed on the holiday atmosphere, however, was the air of tension which precedes a big Parliamentary occasion. For reassembly coincided with the Second Reading of the Health Bill. Question time passed off like the electric calm before a thunderstorm, until Tomlinson informed Savory, fanatical Orangeman from Belfast University, that the statue of William III had been restored to St. James's Square last week. "Is he not aware," cried Savory with emotion, "that his Sacred Majesty is about to cross the river Boyne and therefore should be facing the South on his march to Dublin?" The storm broke.

At last came the expected moment when Aneurin Bevan rose to move his Bill. But this was a different Bevan. Conscious of his responsibilities as opener of a major debate and anxious, presumably, not to generate unnecessary heat which might in the end singe his own beard, he was for the most part as restrained and correct as Eliza Doolittle at Mrs. Higgins's tea-party. Occasionally, the old Eliza showed through the veneer with some flashing phrase. There was one brilliant piece of dialectic on the subject of buying and selling of practices; one passage—on the continuance of fee-paying patients—where he was clearly ill at ease. On the whole, this was a thoughtful, sincere, explanatory speech which held the attention of the House for 73 minutes and enhanced Bevan's reputation.

There the big-match atmosphere ended. Dick Law's reply was unworthy of the occasion. He muffed his opening passage and never fully recovered. The House emptied rapidly in search of tea. For the rest, the Tories seem to have dug out their hoariest relics to debate this imaginative scheme of social progress. Maitland (Hornchurch), York (Ripon), Graham Kerr (Scottish Universities), Morris-Jones (Denbigh) added little constructive argument and were infinitely depressing. Glyn (Abingdon) was a pleasant exception and showed courage and originality. Lady Davidson (Hemel Hempstead), could not conceal, even by her considerable charm of manner and appearance, the defects of what must have been the least helpful speech of the session.

As so often, most of the real criticism—real because constructive and sympathetic—came from the Labour back benches. Comyns (Silvertown) and Alice Bacon (Leeds North-East) both made effective speeches which held the House. Their main point of criticism was the delicate question of fee-paying patients. From Fred Messer (Tottenham South) came perhaps the most successful back-bench speech of the day, criticising the lack of democratic control in the new service. Tony Greenwood, *fils* (Heywood and Radcliffe) scored a bull with his maiden speech, while Arthur, *père*, sat on the Front Bench and tried (unsuccessfully) to look as if he didn't care. To Alice Bacon goes the palm for the best remark of the debate up to the time of writing. Bevan had analogised the continuance of buying privacy in hospitals by suggesting that in a State-run theatre, while everybody could be guaranteed a place, the seats would be sold at different prices. Said Alice, "We can't afford to have any second-rate seats in the operating theatre."

PHINEAS TERTIUS

WHY NATIONALISE STEEL?

The necessity for continued control and early nationalisation of the iron and steel industry arises from the shocking condition to which it has been reduced by an inefficient monopoly. The Cabinet's decision to establish a Control Board to supervise the immediate operation of the industry and to prepare a scheme for transferring all or sections of it to public ownership is not, as Mr. Churchill angrily suggested, a "pure political ramp." It is the only way to secure a sufficient supply of good quality steel at reasonable prices for domestic production and for export. Neither the record nor the plans of the Iron and Steel Federation are such as to inspire confidence in its willingness or ability to introduce an adequate policy of expansion and modernisation.

The British steel industry aims to produce about thirteen million tons this year—at least three million below the minimum requirements of the home and export markets. In 1945, the total production was below twelve million tons. On the score of price, the British trade can be well beaten in its traditional markets by both American and Dominion producers. While this is not of immediate importance in view of the world shortage and of the weak state of the Continental steel industry, without major improvement there is little chance that the cost margin can be reduced by the time when export business must be sustained against competition. Quality, too, has deteriorated, and is a matter of serious concern to motor manufacturers, although these prefer, for obvious reasons, to rest their public criticism of the steel trade on the question of high price levels.

Since the British steelmakers have been adepts at blowing their own trumpets, it is illuminating to examine their record over the last thirty years. Up till the outbreak of war in 1914, there was more or less free competition in the industry and a continual, if erratic, expansion of output. During that war, ingot production went up by more than 25 per cent. As soon as the post-war boom collapsed, the steel producers found themselves saddled with surplus capacity, which they proceeded to eliminate. In rationalising the industry, however, they did not necessarily scrap the most obsolete plant but rather that of the firms which were in financial difficulties. This only stored up trouble. For the competitors of the British iron and steel industry were not burdened with the heavy investments in out-dated equipment which were the price of Britain's early industrial supremacy. Post-war rationalisation could have been the opportunity to restore the comparative efficiency of the British trade. But the chance was lost.

At the same time, the monopolies began to consolidate their position. Already, in 1919, an official report on trusts was referring to combinations "inimical to the public interest" whose "huge profits are a heavy toll on the wages of the poor" and which had turned the public's necessity into their opportunity. The situation was to become even worse as the years of depression passed.

In the early Thirties, the steel producers began to demand fiscal protection against foreign competition. In 1932, they secured a tariff of 10 per cent. They then asked for 33 per cent.—and that, too, was granted. All the same, it was clear that tariffs alone would not suffice, and in 1934 the loosely organised National Federation of Iron and Steel Manufacturers gave way to the phalanx of the Iron and Steel Federation. Aided by the Import Duties Advisory Committee, which was able to give corporate decisions the virtual strength of law, the Federation was soon in action against the Continental steel producers. But when the I.D.A.C. had granted the tariff increase, it had extracted from the Federation a pledge that the industry should be made more efficient.

The pledge was of little use. The tariff acted as a shelter for incompetence and inefficiency. By reducing foreign competition it had weakened the one strong inducement to reorganisation of the British industry. It also strengthened the grip of the price-fixing association, which was in a position where it could ignore the threat of the I.D.A.C. to remove the tariff: it knew that the Government was not prepared to face the unemployment and economic dislocation that would follow if the steel industry was underbid by its foreign competitors. In the two years following the imposition of the tariff, the profits of some fourteen companies rose from a total of £1,341,000 to £4,072,000.

But, though production rose during the Thirties, these profits were due more to the increase of prices for iron and steel. The steelmakers pursued a systematic policy of restriction and price-fixing. Firms which had to face strong foreign competition in British markets overseas were given subsidies to sustain their low tenders, the money being provided from a central fund made up from levies on companies which were benefiting from the protection of the home market. At the same time, Continental producers were given a quota for the British market in exchange for a limitation of their competition abroad. The *Financial News* commented in September, 1938, "if the Federation did not exist there would certainly be a sweeping reduction of prices."

In 1937, British production reached a peak of nearly thirteen million tons. But in 1938 high prices caused a drop in output to 10,398,000 tons. Nevertheless, under the agreement with the Continental steelmakers, their quota had to be maintained and the British producers had to act as sales agents for foreign production at a time when they were short of orders themselves. The British steel ring was by then caught in a vicious circle. Because it had failed to overhaul its plant at the right time and had preferred to maintain its profits by monopoly price-fixing rather than by reducing its costs, it was unable to produce as cheaply as its competitors. And because it could not secure sufficient orders for plant already operating, it refused to build new and more efficient equipment.

The monopoly, therefore, fought bitterly to prevent the establishment of new plants, such as at Jarrow and Ebbw Vale. In the first case, the erection of a giant works on the site of the derelict Palmer's Shipyard was resisted. And the story of the successful attempt to absorb the modern Richard Thomas works at Ebbw Vale is one of the major scandals of British capitalism. The steel ring, backed by the Bank of England, first of all tried to stop the establishment of the Richard Thomas strip mill; when that failed, by preventing Sir William Firth from obtaining the capital he required, Richard Thomas was forced into the monopoly. If the effort to squash the project at birth had been successful, Britain would have entered the war without one modern plant.

When rearmament was well under way, British steel output quickly recovered to reach its highest peak with 13,221,000 tons in 1939. But, owing to the obsolete character of much of the industry's plant, the restrictive policy of the monopoly for nearly a generation, and certain other difficulties, output during the war never reached the 1939 level. One of the most serious obstacles was the shortage of raw materials. During the war of 1914–1918, there was no real scarcity of materials until the last two years. Stocks were ample at first, thanks to the tendency of competitive enterprises to accumulate reserves against possible price variations. The monopoly of the Thirties had had no occasion to do this on anything like the same scale. In fact, during 1938, it had sold abroad substantial quantities of scrap and other raw materials on the grounds that stocks were too great and their sale would yield ready money. These stocks, directly or indirectly, went to the Axis rearmament programme.

This industry, which displayed so little foresight and so much self-interest, could not even offer stable employment or decent wages to its workpeople. Unemployment was never below 20 per cent. during the inter-war years and was nearly 50 per cent. at the bottom of the slump. Skilled workers, at the outbreak of war, were earning less than four pounds a week.

When war came, the Iron and Steel Control was set up; it was, in the words of the Select Committee of National Expenditure, "the personnel of the Iron and Steel Federation in war-time dress." Its primary task was to work out and operate a licensing system. Impressive though its work appeared to be, it failed to keep all the productive plant going at an even rate, consistent with materials and labour, and there were times when steel works were slack through fluctuations in orders. The monopoly grip of the Federation became even stronger and the arrangements for pricing in the industry were thoroughly unsatisfactory. In the last ten years, steel prices have risen by 108 per cent. Even during the war, capacity was not used to the full and attempts to expand existing plant were bitterly resisted. The steel makers did not want to find themselves once more with a mass of surplus equipment even if there was a shortage. It was recently estimated that the steel industry had so successfully resisted the erection of primary plant in the war that 90 per cent. of war-time construction would be useless in peace.

The Federation has now been reorganised with an even tighter centralisation, and, under threat of nationalisation, it has produced its own plan for modernisation of the industry. The full plan is shortly to be published as a White Paper, but we already know that it projects an expenditure of one hundred and sixty-eight million pounds over a five to seven-year period. This apparently impressive figure, however, should be set against the pre-war annual capital expenditure of some ten millions. When allowance is made for six years' arrears—in which taxation reliefs for depreciation had been made—and for the higher costs of construction to-day, it will be seen that there is not so much difference between past and projected capital improvement.

This industry, as Burnham and Hoskins have shown, "would not have declined relatively so fast or so far . . . if the men at the head possessed greater vision and a bolder and more energetic capacity for organisation, direction and administration." It is the job of the Control Board speedily to replace these men and to work out the specific details of nationalisation. Otherwise, in the transition period, the old restrictionist policy will continue and the monopoly will again frustrate efficiency by making up-to-date plants carry the financial burden of those which are obsolete. But the Control Board must not consist of the same men who have staffed the Federation and the war-time Iron and Steel Control: the managers and the trade unions must replace the financiers. If not, the industry will remain as it was in the Thirties when Lord Nuffield called it "a perfect ramp." Unlike Mr. Churchill, he was talking of economics, not politics.

THE CASE AGAINST AFFILIATION

We hope to publish in our next issue a reply to this reasoned statement by a Correspondent of the Labour Party's case.

On previous occasions, when the issue of Communist affiliation has been debated at the Labour Party Conference, the arguments on both sides have been stated mainly in terms of internal British conditions. There have been, of course, on the one side, insistence on the need for friendship with the Soviet Union as the foremost representative of world Socialism, and, on the other, denunciation of the Communist Party as in effect the agent of a foreign power. But always, up to 1939, and even up to 1945, the main question was whether to admit the Communists would help or hinder Labour's bid for the support of the electorate in its struggle for political power. The advocates of affiliation inside the Labour Party argued either in favour of a united working-class front against Chamberlain, or that an infusion of Communists into the party would help to ginger it up and make it more forthright and adventurous in its quest for power. But now that the electorate has given a clear verdict in favour of the Labour Party, without the lack of Communist affiliation standing at all in the way—now that the Labour Party is not merely advocating a far-reaching programme of its own, but is actually in a position to give effect to it—the entire position is altered, and the old arguments in favour of a working-class coalition, designed to win power, have largely gone by the board.

Yet clearly there are new arguments, or a number of powerful Trade Unions and an appreciable fraction of other Labour Party elements would not now be supporting affiliation. These new arguments, however, have a different slant of vision. They are directed mainly, not to strengthening the internal force of British Socialism, but to influencing its outlook on world affairs, and in particular to ranging the British Labour Government more on the Russian and less on the American side in current international discussions and to converting it from the opponent to the advocate of Socialist unity, under Communist leadership, in Western as well as in Eastern Europe. For it would be manifestly difficult, if the Communist Party were to be admitted to the Labour Party in Great Britain, for British influence to be thrown against the fusion of Communist and Social-Democratic Parties either in Germany or anywhere else, and the very possibility of a West European grouping based on Social-Democratic forces and policies would be ruled out.

That, of course, is why the Communist Party is so eager to secure admission to the Labour Party just now, when the critical post-war re-grouping of world forces is taking place. Grant the Communists their initial premises, and the rest follows with perfect logic. Their premises are (a) that the next phase of world history is bound to be a struggle for world-mastery between Capitalism and Socialism, with the United States and the Soviet Union as the two protagonists. In comparison with these two giant embodiments of class forces, the rest of the world, including Great Britain, is a mere *petite bourgeoisie*, incapable of playing any constructive role. (b) The object of each antagonist must therefore be to make a temporary coalition with such part of their *petite bourgeoisie* of nations as it can hope to lead in the coming struggle and, when it cannot lead, at any rate to sow enough dissent to weaken the rest and perhaps prevent it from joining the opposing camp. To those who take up this attitude the contention that there is any independent force in West European Social-Democracy or in the liberal tradition of West European culture is merely nonsense. Cultures are regarded as simple resultants of class conditions, and "liberal" cultures as merely expressions of *bourgeois* societies at an already outmoded stage of their development. The war of the giants is coming; and there is no room on the earth for any doctrine that is not either whole-hogging Capitalist or whole-hogging Socialist on the totalitarian Leninist model.

This argument is valid, if its basic assumption is correct. But most members of the Labour Party and most Social-Democrats in Western Europe do not believe that it is correct. They believe that Socialism can best be achieved for our countries by building upon, and not by destroying, the liberal traditions which it has taken us centuries to create. They are not convinced that, because Britain stands in the middle, we are bound to be crushed between the two extremes—at any rate, if those of us who are in the middle can be induced to stand together as a solid, Social-Democratic group. We believe that our way of advancing towards Socialism is not only, for us,

a better way, because more in tune with the feelings of the millions whose attitude Labour and Social-Democratic Parties purport to represent, but also a more practicable way and, last but not least, a possible way of achieving world Socialism without going through another world war as an incident of the transition.

If, to-day, the Communists were admitted to the Labour Party, they would of necessity carry into every local Labour Party throughout the country, if not into the national councils of the Labour Party as a whole, an unending and disturbing argument on this fundamental issue. They could not help trying to turn the Labour Party away from any attempt to achieve Social-Democratic unity, or to further a Social-Democratic policy, in the international field, and to make it into an auxiliary of the Soviet Union in its attempt to capture every possible point of vantage for the coming world struggle against American-sponsored capitalism. Beside this main objective, nothing else would count, either at home or in foreign or colonial affairs; and the effect could only be, to the extent to which the Communists found any support, to paralyse the Labour Party machine and cause it to display an appearance of internal disunity that would speedily dishearten and probably drive away a large number of those who voted for it last year. Not that the Communists would stand even the smallest chance of really converting the main body of Labour supporters to their point of view. That is not on the cards; for the main body of British opinion is concerned, not to get ready for a coming world war between the Soviet Union and the United States, but to do everything it possibly can to prevent such a catastrophe.

The Labour Party has many faults, but it reflects, in its good and bad qualities alike, pretty well the mood of those who put it into power. Though there are very weak spots in the present Government, it is, in general, as good a Government, supported by as good a majority, as we in Great Britain are likely to get for many a day. It richly deserves the chance of being allowed to get on with its declared policy without being continuously stabbed—or even pin-pricked—in the back. This does not mean at all that it ought to be immune from criticism; indeed, the more freedom there is for such criticism within and without, the better will it be living up to its liberal Social-Democratic creed. But the criticism from within must come from those who accept its fundamental premises, and not from persons who wish to join it only in order to advocate a policy utterly at variance with them.

Above all, the question of Communist affiliation must not be confounded with that of good relations with the Soviet Union. It is an essential part both of our Social-Democracy and of our determination to prevent another world war that we should be at the greatest possible pains to cultivate with the Soviet Union the best possible relations—even if that may require of Mr. Bevin the feat of repeatedly keeping his temper under trying circumstances. It is, moreover, an essential element in this policy that we shall not allow ourselves to appear before the world as satellites of the United States, and that we shall distinguish our world policy from theirs fully as sharply as from that of the Soviet Union. All this, however, is a quite different question from that of accepting or rejecting the Communist Party's claim to enter the Labour Party, which must be settled by answering the prior question whether, in world affairs and particularly on the issue of a coming world struggle for power, the Labour Party and the Communist Party basically agree or disagree. If another world war were really inevitable, there might be nothing for it but to urge the people of Great Britain to rally to the Communist cause; but, even so, it is pretty certain that they would do nothing of the sort. If such a war were inevitable and if it would lead not to Socialism but to sheer disaster for all mankind, the Labour Party had better go on with its own chosen policy of liberal Socialism, and leave the Communist Party to preach its rival doctrine outside. But its members may prefer to join the Labour Party as individuals and bring with them that faith and devotion which could be invaluable to a united working-class party.

FABIUS

HOW BRITAIN LOST THE WAR

THAT America wins all wars she enters is of course a truism, but hitherto there has been a sporting convention that it was her enemies who lost. This old-fashioned attitude is disposed of by Lt.-Col. Ralph Ingersoll in his latest book called—appropriately for a best-seller—*Top Secret*.

It may come as a surprise to some to find that the main American victory in Europe was not over the Germans but the British. However, it turns out that it was we who opposed every attempt of the U.S. Army to get on with the war against Germany, and we fought them with all that brilliance and devotion with which we are credited in defeat.

Odysseus of the many wiles had nothing on us. We were either nice to the American officers (to win them to our way of thinking) or nasty (to get rid of them). We sent out Trojan horses like General Morgan, who appeared to oppose the British and agree to American plans, but secretly sabotaged them; or we engaged in the wicked trickery of loyalty, all holding together and supporting our chiefs rather than each holding out for his own ideas. At least Americans can boast they never practised this latter vice in their own affairs, civil or military.

At "the battle of the Conferences"—where alone Britain really fought—we were adept and victorious. Our single aim was to delay the war, particularly to delay the Second Front, because after all we weren't doing too badly out of the war, weakening the Russians by letting them bear the brunt and getting rich ourselves on American dollars through lend-lease. (Surely it has been forgotten that we also wanted the Germans to give us further aid with our slum clearance problem through the beneficent activities of the Luftwaffe.) The final British triumph was at Quebec (1942) when Mr. Churchill single-handed defeated Mr. Roosevelt, General Marshall, Admiral King, etc., and forced the British plan for delay on the reluctant Americans. He even succeeded by some mysterious and unexplained means in wrecking the U.S. industrial output of Landing Ships to ensure that there was no Second Front.

Alone, gallant, deserted but undismayed, the sole builders of victory, toiling single-mindedly to this end, were the planning staff of General Dewars (Lt.-Col. Ralph Ingersoll was on this staff). But their betrayal was certain and when the Russians eventually forced the British into fighting the war Dewars was exiled. The Second Front was British planned and British commanded. The detail of an American Supreme Commander was of no importance.

Surprisingly enough in view of its dubious antecedents the Invasion was a great success. Even Montgomery as Commander of the ground forces showed some ability in the initial stages (Lt.-Col. Ralph Ingersoll was attached to his staff). However British reluctance to fight eventually reasserted itself and we were stopped at Caen. (Ingersoll had just left the staff.)

From Caen to the end of the war Monty was the villain of the piece. He failed to take Arnhem, he took Antwerp only because the Germans refused to fight, he refused orders to take Walcheren, he failed to cross the Rhine, he failed to get to Hamburg. Finally he it was—now it can be told—who was responsible for the defeat in the Ardennes. Thus at last we know that, when Mr. Churchill publicly emphasised that this was an American victory, what he meant was that it was a British defeat.

The hero, glistening white against Monty's sulphurous black or yellow, is General Bradley. During the later part of the war "the plot was simply Bradley versus the Germans." Lt.-Col. Ralph Ingersoll had, incidentally, joined his staff, who seem to have maintained rather queer relations with their chief:—

> When he was away from Headquarters, they were almost frightened; when he came back, even though they only saw him striding through the hall, everything was all right again. Father had come home. The break-through would be held and the Germans beaten. Omar would know what to do. I never heard him say a harsh word to anyone.

The moral, which has all the subtle inappropriateness of Belloc's cautionary tales, is duly spelled out (in italics) so that even the stupidest can understand:

> During the war, the British attempted to manipulate our military policy so that we would fight the way they wanted it fought—which was an anti-Russian way. They did not succeed. Now, with equal determination, they are attempting to manipulate American foreign policy, to link our future irretrievably with theirs. If they succeed, and if there is a third world war, we will surely fight it for them—against the Russians.

It is easy to laugh at this comic strip view of the war; it is difficult not to laugh at its author—the frustrated Napoleon doomed to watch as a humble lieutenant-colonel (temp.) while generals and marshals missed their chances. Unkind critics will find poor Ingersoll as vulnerable as a beetle on its back. Military men will wonder how it was hoped to win the war by a cross-Channel invasion in 1943 with the green troops who were routed at Kasserine Pass. Psychologists may wonder that the owner of so grotesque an ego should parade it so inflated. Too many people will laugh.

But *Top Secret* is far more than a laughing matter. It is the beginning of the great debunk that inevitably follows the exhilaration of victory. So great has been the price of war, what has been purchased? Last time as America cast away the fruits of victory it seemed that nothing had been gained. Frustration, resentment against the recent ally, and isolation followed.

This time the rout is being led by the Left, not the Right. But it is along the same road. Mr. Ingersoll, the editor of the liberal paper *P.M.*, is appealing to the deep-rooted American isolationism, and the national prejudice against collective security. He does not ask that America should lead the United Nations and Britain out of its anti-Russian rut, he warns that only divorce from Britain will make America safe.

Nor is this a lone voice in American liberal circles, as readers of the NEW STATESMAN AND NATION know. Britain is the bad boy of all their Left-wingers. The criticism from the Left is partly the result of our failure to embrace Russia. From across the Atlantic Socialists and Communists look as alike as Hindus and Moslems—any friction must be the result of a deep-laid plot. But Russia is an excuse rather than a real cause. At heart the American Left is jealous of the British Left, and this opens the Pandora's box of the national inferiority complex.

The American Left is impotent and frustrated. For six years America has moved steadily to the Right, while we have moved to the Left. While we fulfil our promises of freedom to India (the favourite Briton-baiting ground), America fails to fulfil her promises of food to India. While the New Deal is forgotten, we have a Socialist Government. The American liberals, lacking influence at home, are making criticisms abroad a substitute for policy. This will not last, and we must not be estranged from our friends because of a passing phase. Some day American liberalism will be freed from the clutches of the Maiden Aunts who have kidnapped it and will move forward again. Then it will be by our side.

JOHN CRUSOE

A LONDON DIARY

The public is under the impression that, with the help of Clark Kerr, the Van Mook conversations in Indonesia are succeeding, and that the British troops will soon be evacuated. I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the facts are far different. The Dutch Government seems to be double-crossing, and I learn that the recent Indonesian delegation to Holland is returning home disappointed and disillusioned. From detailed accounts that have reached me of recent conversations in Amsterdam with the Indonesian Ministers, I gather that the Dutch Cabinet is side-stepping the Clark Kerr-Van Mook-Sjahrir basis for negotiations, and trying to stand on the old February 10th proposals which Dr. Sjahrir turned down over two months ago. When the Indonesian Ministers arrived with Dr. Van Mook in Holland, the foreign Press said that an agreement had been reached and the object of the trip was to enable Indonesian Ministers to put their case before the Dutch people. But in fact the Dutch Government objected to the proposed settlement, and, on the grounds that the Indonesian Ministers were guests of the Dutch Government and not of the Dutch people, refused them any opportunity to broadcast or address large public meetings. Another reason for playing the issue down in Holland is the approach of the elections. All parties are afraid to commit themselves too deeply over Indonesia.

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Reports from Indonesia increase these misgivings. The Indonesian Government has no facilities for communicating with the outside world; all their communications have to go through Dutch censorship, and bear newly-printed Dutch stamps with the inscription "Netherlands-India." The Dutch are apparently playing for time, pretending that they are negotiating on the Clark Kerr basis, while a steady stream of Dutch troops, trained in Britain, arrives in Java. I cannot believe that the British Government intends to allow this kind of trickery. Britain is in a position to insist that the Dutch Cabinet acts on the agreed Clark Kerr-Van Mook-Sjahrir proposals and gives the Indonesian Government free and uncensored opportunities to explain their position to the world. The dangers of letting the situation drift are obvious. The British may be again caught in a trap and find themselves fighting for an unjust cause. Everyone agrees that if the Dutch try to use force, the Indonesians will not yield.

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The fact that Mr. Ralph Ingersoll publishes "sensational revelations" about American bases for jet-propelled planes directed against the U.S.S.R. does not mean that an American-Russian war is imminent. Similarly, the fact, stated by Mr. Gallacher, in the House of Commons this week and admitted, with apologies and regrets, by Mr. Bellenger, Under-Secretary of State for War, that "the opening narrative of an exercise on December 18th, 1945," postulated that "large and well-equipped Soviet forces, under the pretext of keeping law and order in Arabia, have been moving into the country" does not mean that Britain is expecting soon to be at war with the U.S.S.R. What these things do mean is that in a state of international anarchy all Great Powers prepare for war, their staffs direct the preparations against a hypothetical enemy Power, and in so doing, make war more likely with that Power, which of course, prepares for war and directs its plans on the basis of exactly the same hypothesis. Once Staff plans are made on the assumption of a possible war, it is not easy to switch them to a new strategic conception. I recall the account, given me by a very distinguished member of the Liberal Government of 1906, of the difficulty that Ministers had to persuade the Staff, after the formation of the Triple Entente, to plan their manœuvres on the assumption that the next war would be fought not against France, our hereditary enemy, but against Germany, which had usually been our ally. To-day, joint Staff conversations for an international police force are on the Uno agenda; Britain, America and Russia are all supposed to be allies pooling their plans for world peace! But nothing in fact has changed—except that the war these lunatics are now preparing for would bring this particular phase of human society to a deserved and miserable end.

* * *

Edward Thompson lived and died bravely. Outside his directly autobiographical work I think one gets the best insight into his character, ambitions and disappointments in his admirable novel *Burmese Silver*, which describes the Civil Servant who understands and loves the people among whom he is working, brings about a settlement in spite of the opposition of more Blimpish officials, only to find at the end of his labours that he is doomed to an early death from an incurable illness. Thompson was an excellent poet, novelist and playwright, and he wrote (with G. T. Garratt) a standard history of India. He could also be a brilliant journalist on occasion. Amongst his articles in this journal, I recall particularly the one which told unpleasing truths about the Indian Princes, and included the story of a royal tiger hunt in which the tiger which was shot proved to have gilded claws. His greatest interest in life, however, lay in understanding Indian thought. He was a close friend of Tagore, Gandhi and many other Indian leaders, and his last mission of reconciliation was at the height of the Indian troubles five years ago. He was an extremely sensitive man and the right kind of patriot. He cared for the things in England that are most worth while, and was tortured with anxiety both about our foreign policy before the war and our failure as rulers in India. A great sorrow was added to the pain of his illness towards the end of the war. His son, Major Frank Thompson, R.A., volunteered as a liaison officer with the Bulgarian Partisans, and was shot by his captors after making a gallant stand for the cause he had at heart. Edward Thompson was a many-sided man who will probably be most remembered as one of those occasional Englishmen who, serving in the East, have become scholars in the literature and thought of the people themselves and have grown increasingly resentful of the assumed superiority of the West. The quality of sympathetic understanding is rare, and when it is combined with idealism and artistic power, its value in the world is beyond estimation.

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We have the second issue of *Russian Review* (Penguin 1s.). It contains Alex Werth's excellent account of his visit to Lublin and Maidanek in August 1944, just after they were liberated. The Warsaw rising was in its last tragic phase and Werth makes it clear that the Russians were more unable than unwilling to help because they had just suffered a serious defeat on the approaches to the Polish capital. The Russians left themselves open to the gravest of charges because they would not publicly admit this defeat. This chapter from Werth's forthcoming book is the most balanced and illuminating discussion of Russo-Polish relations and of the feud between the rival Lublin and London Governments that I have seen. Werth's report on Maidanek will stand alongside Patrick Gordon-Walker's broadcast from Belsen as a permanent record of the Nazis' organised and stupendous cruelty. The other contributors, some British, some Russian, including Walter Elliot and Alexis Tolstoy, deal with a range of subjects from oil to music. I was charmed by the Soviet short story about the birth of a baby in the Arctic, a thousand miles from the gynaecologist who delivers the child by running instructions in morse over the radio. You have to be tough in the North.

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One of the last actions of Lord Keynes was to give a helping hand to a company of Javanese and Balinese dancers who are due to arrive in England about the end of May. This company of about twenty members, including five girls, is to appear at the Embassy Theatre about June 11th; with the aid of the Arts Council it hopes to perform in several provincial towns. The dancers, who were students in Holland, and caught by the war in Europe, come from all parts of Indonesia, and will give dances from Java, Bali, Sumatra and Celebes; and they will also sing some keronchongs, the universally popular songs of the archipelago. I'm told that their repertoire includes the beautiful Classical Dances of Java and Bali, simple, or even comic, folk-dances from Sumatra and Minahassa, and highly dramatic versions of the "penchak" which is the Indonesian method of fighting, stylised into a vivid and terrifyingly energetic dance. The object of the performances will be to raise funds for the establishing in London of a Hostel for Indonesian students.

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I asked a housewife how far she had been affected by the "save bread" campaign. She said that it had made her feel ashamed of throwing away crusts and odd bits of bread, and by careful management she found she could save a loaf a week in her small household. The defect of the campaign from her point of view, however, was that it had not been shown her just how the bread she saved would get to the people who needed it so much more.

CRITIC

JERUSALEM

(After William Blake)

And will they raise on Jordan's hills
  A mosque, a temple and a shrine,
And reconcile eternal ills
  By dedicating Palestine?

And will they build in days to come,
  By pleasure domes of Galilee,
Beneath the wing of Christendom
  A tripartite theocracy?

Bring me my staff of wishful thought!
  Belief in miracles persists,
The formula for peace is brought
  To Arabs and to Zionists.

But Britain's mandate will not cease,
  Nor will the sword sleep in our hand,
Till we have made Jerusalem,
  A Holy, Holy, Holy, Land.

SAGITTARIUS

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to Dr. Falkland L. Cary.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

"This is the B.B.C. Light Programme. And now we are taking you over to the unexploded bomb in St. James's Park."—The B.B.C., Friday, April 26th.

If you cook prawns when they are dead they will be flabby and lifeless.—From article in *Daily Mirror*.

"You could tell he was in a fighting mood, because he took his teeth out," John Leslie Swinfield, a labourer, of Baker-street, informed the Leicester magistrates to-day.—*Leicester Mercury*.

Active, intelligent, educated woman (30), especially interested Cosmetics, with spare time available evenings and week-ends, invites propositions.—Advert. in *The Times*.

The Pope holds no official position in the British Government, and has no seat in the House of Lords.—*Hull Daily Mail*.

The Chief Scout Visits Hertfordshire. "There are approximately the same number of Scouts in the world as there are letters in the Bible." This item of information was given to the Scouters of Hertfordshire on St. George's Day at the Town Hall, St. Albans.—*The Herts and Essex Observer*.

PRIVILEGE IN RUSSIA

It is disturbing to find how many well-intentioned people in this country are getting it into their heads that Russia is not really a Socialist society. For anyone who has spent any length of time there during the last five years, the notion that she is in any way abandoning Socialism is fantastic. During the war, I saw a number of things in Russia which have distressed so many of her would-be friends unnecessarily—such as, for instance, the glorification of the corps of officers and the reduction of the school-leaving age. I also have been regaled with caviare and champagne (both Russian products, remember; *not* imported luxuries) while people all but starved across the street. I also have seen a ballerina in a mink coat (another local product) installed in a shiny car with a shiny near-Commissar, sweeping past a shivering bread-line on her way to drink champagne and gobble caviare in the company of foreign diplomats and journalists . . . On the other hand, I have also, in a howling blizzard, collided head-on with a frail and tottering washerwoman struggling down Petrovka with a monstrous pile of washing in her arms, sifted heavily with snow—only to find myself face to face with the blue eyes and long, snow-spangled lashes of that same ballerina beneath the washerwoman's shawl . . . Her bundle was not washing at all, but her own ballet-dress. In this, in fifteen minutes' time, she was due to dance in an unheated hall with an outside temperature of 15 deg. C. below. Afterwards she would return to an unheated flat and a supper of black bread and a glass of tea—if the gas was functioning. She was quite a famous dancer and, as such, of course, a privileged person; not one of the three senior spell-binders, but about the standard of, say, Danilova. So she had all sorts of comforts the others hadn't got. She had one hot meal a day, but with her colleagues, provided by the State. She had a room and a half of her own, with every facility for light and heat—when these were turned on, which was usually between two and five in the morning. And did she not sometimes—say, three or four times a year—ride in a big car to an official function?

That sentimental story tells you more about privilege in Russia to-day than any amount of solemn argument. When the Russians can feast, they feast. There is not enough for many feasts, and the people most likely to come in for the caviare are the more irreplaceable ones, who have to be pampered from time to time. The most irreplaceable ones of all are pampered all the time. They have two or three rooms, enough to eat always, and a ride in a car every day. They go to more parties, too. These stupendous privileges they receive in exchange for the very special labours they are asked to perform unceasingly. The idea is to save them from breaking down, because they are irreplaceable.

To-day, of course, the ballerina I spoke of would have more to eat. The date of that encounter was the winter of 1942, when things were very bad. They are better now. And everybody else is also getting more to eat.

The key to so many mysteries of Soviet life and organisation is the word "scarcity." For in Russia to-day there is a scarcity of everything under the sun except vision and courage—and unskilled labour. Every possible expedient, however short-term, however apparently retrograde, however potentially *dangerous*, has to be taken to meet this scarcity. There is, for instance, a shortage of officers or, shall we say, potential officers—the type of organiser and leader by example, who has also brains. Had the great purges been carried out with more steadiness, intelligence and skill, this particular shortage might not have become so acute, but it would still have existed. A purge was plainly necessary, and its wholesale and extravagant nature was in itself due to the general scarcity—this time a scarcity of trained and responsible people to sift the sheep from the goats with economy and precision.

"The impossible we do at once. Miracles take longer." This modest device hung throughout the war over the desks of harassed clerks in a thousand orderly rooms of the British Army. It might well have served as a motto for the Kremlin. Soviet Russia did the impossible by raising herself to a first-class industrial power in twenty-five years, thus finding the strength to beat back the German Army while simultaneously educating the people who had to create the power, and redeeming illiterate millions. The miracle of turning the millions into highly trained specialists with a common cultural background is taking a little longer; but, in spite of the war, it is under way, and nothing but another war can stop it.

Hence, among other things, the shortage of officers. When the cream of the regulars had been killed off in the dreadful reverses suffered by the Russians while they were learning how to fight their brand-new army, ordinary peasant conscripts who had proved themselves good fighting-men had to be commissioned in vast numbers. They were not officers by temperament or training. They had to be made to feel and behave like officers with the aid of every material and visible distinction that could be contrived.

Remembering the statistical facts of the ruin that was Lenin's Russia after the Intervention, the Civil War and the great famine; remembering that stability had to be recovered through the medium of officials, managers, scientists, technicians and educators, who, in large part, had first to be educated themselves; remembering that once some sort of stability was established there could be no breathing-space, because a primitive, agricultural society had to be turned at once into an industrialised state strong enough to support a mechanised army which could stand up to the Germans; remembering, finally, that, in order to get machines, Russia had to export the food she desperately needed for her own consumption—remembering all this, we can begin to get some idea of the almost paralysing scarcity, not only of goods but of skilled labour. It was not until shortly before the war that consumer goods began to appear in any quantity. By the winter of 1941 they were already a beautiful dream, and a weary people, tired out with a long and bitter slog against adversity, found themselves suddenly back where they had been for so long, and this time with the German Army at their throats and sacking the country they had laboured to build up. And this shattering disaster occurred at precisely the moment when, for the first time, they were thinking of a little relaxation. Even a Russian Communist has limits to his endurance, and the day arrives when the most fanatical Stakhanovite feels a longing to be pampered.

The Government decided to pamper him. There were still a few, infinitesimally few, of the material comforts of life, and the Government wanted to make sure they reached the hands of the right people, the people who had earned them most, the people who were irreplaceable and most exhausted, on the principle of "to each according to his work." Some people are bewildered by the apparent size of income variations. What is there "apparent" about a factual difference between 300 roubles a month and 3,000? Well, a difference of several thousand roubles a month may be simply the difference between having a gramophone and not having a gramophone. It is not, as it might appear, the difference between a life of untrammelled luxury and ease and a life in the gutter. There is no ease in the U.S.S.R., and luxury, to put it mildly, is patchy and intermittent. The man with the gramophone lives otherwise much as everybody else. Everybody has so much money accumulated for lack of anything to spend it on that if the few "luxury" articles were put on the market at reasonable prices they would be torn to pieces in a cut-throat scramble. So they are put on the market at unreasonable prices, and the selected few (selected rigidly by the criterion of services rendered) are given unreasonable wages to buy them with.

There is no discernible crystallisation of new classes round these different income levels. There are, inevitably, broad classes, corresponding with the different types of labour—white-collar labour, agricultural labour, artisan labour, unskilled labour, intellectual labour, and revolutionary labour—as I suppose one might call professional Communism; but these classes are not differentiated by the sharp income discrepancies, which, generally, occur within them—so that a Stakhanovite foreman, an individual, may earn more than the manager of his factory.

Some people say certain aspects of Russian life to-day have the air of anti-Socialism; therefore they indicate that the Kremlin has gone back on Socialism. I say they indicate something quite different. I know that Russia is a Socialist, an *increasingly* Socialist, country as a result of prolonged residence there. Socialism is in the air you breathe, and it shows itself in a thousand details which cannot be recorded here. Apparently anti-Socialist actions may have no explanation at all, except muddle. Russia, like our own country, has always been prone to muddle, and the Revolution has, in some ways, not yet improved matters. The general result is formidable. And so is the cost . . . Imagine, as a sample, the sort of peasants and unskilled workers described by Chekhov and Turgeniev suddenly let loose in a machine-shop. Or consider the problem of the "In Trays" at the Politburo, in whose bottomless depth converge all the strings uniting the organisation of All Russia. Reflect then on the potentialities of muddle and confusion, sheer human muddle, let alone the Russian variety. And then stand amazed, not at the odd and not easily explicable things which go on inside Russia to-day, but at the miracle of her survival.

EDWARD CRANKSHAW

MUSIC

Now that incuriosity and indifference to quality have become the rule among our audiences, there is an encouraging quality about the little Wigmore Hall public: critical, curious and alert, they know a good thing when they hear it. I am therefore the more upset when I see them let down. A week or two ago some of them were badly let down on the occasion of Maggie Teyte's return after her triumphant American tour. The hall was full, as anyone could have foretold; and, as happens all too often, the programmes ran out. In an instrumental concert the result is not serious; but for a programme of this order words are an absolute essential, and the dozens of wordless listeners were simply not receiving their money's worth from Miss Teyte's charming performances. Responsibility rests, I understand, not with the managers of the hall, but with Messrs. Ibbs and Tillett, the concert promoters. Now it is conceivable that paper rationing compelled them to print an inadequate number of programmes; but in that case they would be well advised to take the audience into their confidence and restrict sales to one per two persons, thus avoiding a great deal of justifiable irritation among their patrons.

It was delightful to see the Wigmore packed again for Lucille Wallace's harpsichord recital. This admirable performer gave an all-Bach programme, of which the central feature was the *Goldberg Variations*. The truth is slowly getting around that this work is not the mere display of hair-raising abstract contrapuntal ingenuity which it used to be thought, but a most varied and entertaining masterpiece of keyboard music, sometimes humorous, sometimes passionate, never for a moment dull. No one has done more to dispel the work's false reputation for austerity than Mme. Landowska, both by her many concert performances (and, by the way, when is she going to play to us again?) and by her fascinating set of gramophone records (a re-recording of which has just appeared in America). Miss Wallace, who is an artist of great distinction in her own right, stood up to the august comparison with ease in the matter of style and interpretation; and if she cannot quite equal the formidably precise finger-technique of Mme. Landowska—well, no more can anyone else!

The Boyd Neel Orchestra announce a second series of six Monday evening concerts at the Chelsea Town Hall, the programmes of which are even more inter-

esting than before. They include Chausson's *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* (with Maggie Teyte, May 6th), D'Indy's *Triple Concerto* and Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (May 20th), Vaughan Williams's *Oboe Concerto* (June 3rd), Richard Strauss's *Metamorphoses*, his latest work, described as a "study for 23 solo strings" (June 17th), Hindemith's *Viola Concerto* ("*Trauermusik*") and a new work by Honegger (July 1st) and Bartok's *Music for Strings and Percussion* (July 15th). Without the enterprise of two or three individuals, London music would be desperately dull.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

RADIO NOTES

Theatre Programme. Always lively, but the kind of thing that will be better if it is taken over by Television. A medley is quite easy to accept, if the eye accompanies the change of subject. At present, Britten's choruses from *This Way to the Tomb*, followed closely by the reminiscences of a theatrical dresser (very interesting in themselves), somehow do not make good listening. The dissociation of ideas is too complete. And a scrap of recorded music from *Les Patineurs* seems rather pointless, unless the broadcast consists entirely of music; if we could see the dancers as well, it would fall into the pattern of the programme. Scrappiness is the bane of these broadcasts (as it is the bane of this column). I suggest that, if this series is to continue for long, it should contain far more discussion, by dramatists, actors, producers and critics, of what is wrong with the English stage—and at present almost everything is wrong with it—and less of Mr. or Miss So-and-So in their favourite parts. Admittedly this would create a different kind of programme, but I think it would be a change for the better, since the present form falls between two stools.

Roger Keyes Memorial Programme. A poor substitute for a well-written talk. I dislike saying this, because dramatised radio can be so much more vivid than straight narrative; but aren't we all getting rather weary of the outworn feature technique in which this broadcast was composed. A "period" tune, stuck in from time to time, does not by itself create an illusion of period; impressionism must be more subtly managed than this. And dramatic sequences must be long enough to establish some kind of scene or atmosphere in the listener's mind. You cannot build up an impression of a character in the making by these scissors-and-paste methods.

V. S. Pritchett on Gogol. This was everything which the last-mentioned programme failed to be. A plain talk, it built up a complete picture of Gogol and at the same time filled in the historical background very dexterously. Drama was supplied by Mr. Pritchett's extraordinarily brilliant reading of portions of *Dead Souls*. One would like to hear this expert broadcaster read some more extended piece of comic fiction. His changes of voice and tempo were of the nicest.

Violin Concerto by Bernard Stevens. A deeply serious composition, of considerable emotional power. Mr. Stevens's harmony is rich, consistent, and agreeable to listen to; and the quality of his thematic ideas produces some fine, spacious effects. The orchestration is far too dense for a concerto, and in the first movement the climaxes are placed so close together that the formal pattern is lost in a vague sensation of rhapsody. Another reason for the comparative failure of this movement to "get itself across" is the fact that the composer has tried to cram too many ideas into it—a good fault in a young man. The slow movement, with its beautiful long tune, has far more tensity. Throughout both mood and rhythm are too unvaried to make this concerto easy to assimilate; but there is no doubt that Mr. Stevens is a poet with something to say. I look forward to his next work. The solo in the concerto was very finely played by Max Rostal.

RECOMMENDATIONS.—*Sunday, May 5th.* Symphony Concert (2.30 p.m.); Queen Victoria was Furious (7 p.m.); Aeolian String Quartet (11.3 p.m.)

Monday, May 6th. If You'd Lived Then (7.40 p.m.); Juno and the Paycock (9.15 p.m.); Bartok Quartet (11.25 p.m.).

Tuesday, May 7th. Piano recital by Mewton Wood (10.15 p.m.).

Wednesday, May 8th. Scientific Exploration and Research (L.P. 10.40 a.m.); Brahms recital (1.15 p.m.); Book Talk, E. M. Forster (6.20 p.m.); Elijah (7.15 p.m.).

Thursday, May 9th. Concert (3 p.m.).

Friday, May 10th. Benjamin Franklin (L.P. 10 a.m.); What's in Your Mind? (L.P. 3 p.m.); Leonce de Saint Martin (7.30 p.m.); Our Correspondent (9.30 p.m.).

Saturday, May 11th. Home Town (L.P. 10 a.m.); Double Concerto by Delius (3 p.m.).

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

THE MOVIES

"The Blue Dahlia," at the Plaza.
"Mildred Pierce," at Warner's.

Chaplin is reported to have thrown away boots, cane and moustache in order to embark on a Life of Landru. How many years this will occupy, how many loves will be packed into the Frenchman's little oven we aren't of course told, but I imagine the approach will be sympathetic. All the world—except perhaps Soviet Russia—loves a killer. Two murders reach the screen this week in the routine of tribute.

Both have been devised by experts, whose books probably you have come across: Raymond Chandler and James L. Cain. The first, at any rate, has done better before in *Double Indemnity*. Still, *The Blue Dahlia* is a superior article. Its slickness tickles, it achieves two corpses and a happy end, there are red herrings and camera angles to delight the connoisseur. And—best of all—the nonchalance of Ladd and Lake, improving on recent form, is offset by one first-rate piece of acting: William Bendix's ex-soldier with noises in the head. Here, to bullish honesty and blunt wit, is added nightmare, and the trail of inner drama, besides foxing the clues, enormously increases one's interest. Bendix is one of the very few actors whom Hollywood has failed to spoil; from time to time it even looks round for that big role which obviously he and no one else can fill. *The Hairy Ape* almost found it; the faults of that piece weren't owing to Bendix. His tragic-comic gifts lead one to think of Michel Simon, of Laughton. Less subtle than either, he has a physical intensity denied to the first and success hasn't made of him a dancing bear like the second. Zola could have written him a part! Meanwhile, Mr. Chandler has done nicely. *The Blue Dahlia* offers among well-polished thrills a character in the round.

Flatness returns with *Mildred Pierce*, a well-intentioned, a well-devised rolling out of incident and chiaroscuro—but flat, flat! There's Miss Joan Crawford who always looks just right, with her mask of tragedy, for a scene that never begins. As a mysterious figure glimpsed from time to time in the background she would be unforgettable; here alas! you have her on view, always staring, while the camera swings to and fro before that rigid expression. It is only fair to add that this inflexibility seems in keeping with the whole story, which is hard-surfaced with cracks laboriously probed. No way to explore a life-time, though it could lend excitement to a moment-to-moment narrative. Despite insensitiveness, however, *Mildred Pierce* isn't by any means a bad film.

I miss, week after week, our English contribution to the murder festival. We don't lack competent writers—Graham Greene, Patrick Hamilton, Eric Ambler, and C. S. Forester could hold their own any day. Then why don't we get the films? One answer would be that Hollywood has bought them up already; another that we are shy of exposing national ideals. While America adulates its flint-faced killer, we prefer not to tell. Our daydream, if it came to the point, would probably reveal a bigamist with a multiple savings account.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Better Late," at the Garrick
"A Phœnix Too Frequent," at the Garrick

All the right kind of revue experts have been collected for *Better Late*, but during the first half the company seems bogged in its own talent. No one can be gruff more amicably than Miss Swinstead, nor diabolise more conscientiously than Mr. Crisham; but in a deepening silence Miss Hyman's beauty grows more pained, Miss Lillie can scarcely conceal her impatience, and Mr. Benson, who can be tremendously keen about almost anything, is screwed up like a ginger-beer bottle and buried in two disguises. The only success so far has been the decor of Mr. Rolf Gerard, whose name is tucked away at the end of the programme. But standing in the wings is Mr. Norman Marshall, who in the theatre can be relied upon to pat or nudge breath into the apparently still-born. And sure enough, suddenly everything comes to life at once, in a scene which goes back to the nostalgia-proof period of 1921.

It cannot be only the effect of the "fatal interval" which makes this reconstruction of the Japanese Sand-man age so horrifyingly funny. Every detail of dance routine and charm sequence, with the forefingers of the lady jigging idiotically upwards, seems made to fit the cylindrical gowns and jerky gaiety which parades in front of a backcloth of mixed palm and marble, laburnum and lilac. From now on the revue is made. Whether, more than anything, she is Hating the Spring, or whether after a couple of brandies she is realising, Maud, that we are rotten at the core, Maud, or whether she is turning her tragic face away from the man who has taken a sticky label and slapped it across her heart (Not Wanted on the Voyage), Miss Lillie is the goddess of satire. Naturally the rest of the company feel that in her presence to be satirical has about it the embarrassment of profanity. But Walter Crisham is most effective in a shrewdly sentimental G.I. soliloquy. Mr. Benson, uncorked at last, raises laughter not loud but deep by revealing that whereas male washing-up used to be a question of holding an occasional glass under the tap, the 1946 husband is actually expected to clean the porridge saucepan not only with a scratcher to remove the rim of cold porridge at the top; he must be prepared, for the interstices, to use something even smaller and sharper called a scritcher.

Personally I am *anti* plays dealing with the remote past which mix up modern idiom with ancient behaviour. If the belaboured moral is true, that human nature is always the same, still the least interesting aspects are those which never vary. But Christopher Fry's new play at the Mercury, *A Phœnix Too Frequent*, although it is set in the classical past, is a modern play in a fancy dress of costume and incident. Exactly why Dynamene decides not to follow her husband to the shades is less important than the exceptional wit and poetry of the lines. When the soldier is complimented on the cup from which he drinks the wine, he remarks that "now it is peace time we have pottery classes," and a well Forces-educated audience laughs for nearly a minute. Mr. Martin Browne's cast is equal to the athletics of the diction. Miss Summerfield realises better than anyone else the minute scale of acting most effective for the small theatre: Miss Hannen shapes her words with the perfection only achieved by one who has inherited the gift of acting from about four directions at once.

STEPHEN POTTER

"The Cave and the Garden," at the Players

The *Late Joys* have lost much of their intimate flavour in the Players' new home under the Charing Cross Arches, but the change has given us a new centre of drama in London. Their first play, *The Cave and the Garden* by Ormerod Greenwood is a gay and modernised version of an old story used by Boccaccio and Chaucer. Both of these eminent men of letters appear on the stage to comment on the efforts of the young author. The moral, if one may use so heavy a word of so pleasant a comedy, seems to be that the same human situations occur at all periods of history and evoke the same emotions, but that the solutions will vary as time passes. The play, skilfully produced by Leonard Sachs, would be worth seeing if only for Mr. Reginald Woolley's beautiful scenery and décor. As the great lady emotionally entangled in her own trap, Sheila Burrell gives a particularly happy performance; in the contrasting part Julia Lang is equally good as the humble and self-abnegating lover. The level of the acting is good. The Players are to be congratulated on opening a new phase of their existence with a performance that is gay and full of the unexpected. We may hope for even better things from them.

BALLET ON THREE STAGES

Within three weeks of Robert Helpmann's spectacular "philosophic" ballet, *Adam Zero*, Frederick Ashton has filled the same great stage with a ballet which for all its apparent simplicity makes greater demands on the imagination and technique of all concerned. Beneath its serene and shining surface lies a store of experience and imaginative reference impossible to analyse in a short paragraph. The curtain rises immediately on the six dancers, who are the embodied voices of César Franck's music: Margot Fonteyn, Pamela May, Moira Shearer, Michael Somes, Brian Shaw and Henry Danton. Radiant in white, they are posed in two widely spaced lines before a backcloth where harmoniously black curves are superimposed on the fresh green and grey of opening spring; an exquisite picture for which Sophie Fedorovitch is responsible. The theme and variations are divided between the dancers, chosen for their musicality as much as for their excellent technique; and great demands are made on both. The lovely patterns woven by the dancers, the circular, parallel or contrapuntal movements throughout the six variations, interlude and finale, reveal a profound sensitiveness to the musical structure; even the breath-taking ecstatic *renversée*, winging a pirouette, in Brian Shaw's exciting solo, is not there just for effect, but for musical expression. The "drama" in this ballet lives only in the line pursued by the dancers, in the curves of their bodies, in the angle of their heads. Therefore every movement, every spacing, becomes of great importance, and a flaw is as conspicuous as a false note in music. In *Dante Sonata* the great emotional stream comes rushing out with all its rocks and stones and trees, and the snatches of lyricism which relieve its passionate drama are emotional, not yet distilled to the heavenly serenity of the *Symphonic Variations*. But the fact that this ballet has been universally acclaimed as "exciting" shows that quietism need not be dull. Angus Morrison, who played the piano part, was rightly acclaimed as one of the dancers.

The final week's programme of the French ballets at the Adelphi includes the long-awaited *Fiancée du Diable*. The lighting on the first night did not do justice to M. Jean-Denis Macles' decor, nor give full effect to the nocturnal witchery of Roland Petit's choreography. The setting of the mysterious Gothic house into whose outer court the Traveller, M. Paul Gnatt, is swept by the storm, is very beautiful, and ingeniously converted, by the addition of a chandelier, into an inner hall where servants with their brooms turn their acrobatic talents to account by parodying the coming bridal. The principals, Roland Petit, Paul Gnatt and Irene Skorik danced superbly; the choreography as a whole seems to need clarifying a little; but it needs a larger stage—Covent Garden, for example. The oftener one sees *Jeu de Cartes* the more one admires the dynamic beauty of the music and of the choreography, which at first seeing is completely dominated by the magnificent dancing of Babilée as the Joker. The little Goyaesque ballet *Los Caprichos* has singular charm. The dancing and castanet playing of Ana Nevada, who with Juanito Garcia designed the choreography, are of unusual beauty, and there is an unforgettable nightmare dance by Juanito Garcia which for demoniac fury I have never seen equalled in Western dancing.

There is no doubt that in his *Ballets Négres* Berto Pasuka has discovered a new art form, which in dance may have an impact comparable to that of primitive African sculpture. Pasuka himself is a magnificent dancer and actor. His portrayal of the Witch Doctor and of the Prophet who, because he fails to fly to heaven, is clapped into jail, is really superb. His body shrinks, or stretches to heroic height at will, or rather at the command of the rhythm by which he is possessed. Even more astonishing is the largely improvised performance of the unprofessional members of his negro cast, whom we have not space to name. The small orchestra of negro musicians, with tom-toms, native rattles and voice made a great impression, as did also the low notes produced in the stomach of the dancers, a negro counterpart to the wild shouts of the Polovtsian warriors in *Prince Igor*. The company did wonders with the cramped stage of the Twentieth Century Theatre.

BERYL DE ZOETE

Correspondence

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

SIR,—I fear you will consider it an impertinence for a Conservative to intrude on a domestic squabble within your excellent but not very Conservative paper.

But now that I know what Mr. Zilliacus is prepared to fight against "whilst he has breath in his body" and what he considers "the battle which will decide whether we win or lose the peace," I cannot forbear to say that some of us fought for something very different and consider victory in the peace for which we too made some sacrifice dependent on far other issues.

What shocks us about Mr. Zilliacus and his friends is not the question whether they stand for or against a Western Bloc, or whether they have any right to call themselves members of the Labour Party when their real sympathies so obviously lie elsewhere. What shocks us is the complete absence from all their speaking and writing of anything which remotely resembles the humanist and Christian tradition on which the whole artistic, literary and ethical culture of Western Europe is founded—and, more even than this, their apparent unconsciousness that such things matter at all. Mr. Zilliacus, it seems, is prepared to fight Mr. Winterton as long as he has breath in his body. For what? Not to put an end to the fratricidal cruelties which have been tormenting Europe since 1914, not to restore fair and open trials, personal liberties, freedom of movement and discussion, but apparently to stop a particular political fusion in the interests of a social revolution which may or may not be desirable in itself but can hardly be an end in itself independent of all means whereby it is attained. To some of us all this, important as it is in some ways, is remote and unimportant compared with the moral collapse of civilisation we are faced with. The real battle which is going to determine "whether we win or lose the peace" will be decided by our answer to the question whether by some means or another we can restore to European humanity that men are brothers, and not just Fascist Beasts, Mongol hordes, proletarians, counter-revolutionaries and the like. The lie in the soul of the totalitarian is that he makes politics a religion, and a persecuting religion at that; the result is the same whatever the politics, and it is precisely because Mr. Zilliacus more perhaps than any other of the lesser luminaries in the present political firmament stands forth as the champion of anti-humanism that some of us would consider the war lost if he wins, despite the defeat of Hitler.

All Souls College, Oxford. QUINTIN HOGG

SIR,—Mr. Adam Romer, a distinguished member of the London Polish emigration, does not question my statement about the former relationship between Mr. Mikolajczyk and the British Government, nor does he deny that his political influence to-day rests largely on the fact that he is regarded as the prime repository in Poland of official British friendship and confidence. But he says that I am wrong to write that British influence is being exerted on Mr. Mikolajczyk and the Right Wing of the Peasant Party to break out of the coalition and fight the next election on their own.

My information comes from eye-witness British Parliamentary, as well as Polish, sources. Mr. Romer, of course, as a London emigré, has no direct information, and relies on inspiration. It goes without saying that he and his emigré friends ardently hope, for the reasons touched on in my letter, that the coalition will break up. Incidentally, I note from the Press that our busy Foreign Office has just been turning the heat on again in Warsaw in favour of early elections, while the U.S. State Department has told the Poles that they may obtain an American loan only if they run their elections and economic policy according to American ideas.

Mr. Tom Taylor is worried by my statement that the American and British Governments have let it be known that Unrra supplies would be increased if Mikolajczyk became Prime Minister. He points out that the charter of Unrra formally prohibits the manipulation of Unrra supplies for political purposes and challenges me to prove my assertion.

I cannot prove something that has not yet happened. But if Mr. Taylor will enquire in authoritative Polish circles, he can satisfy himself of the reasons for the apprehensions on this score entertained in Warsaw. He must be aware that it is the U.S. and British Governments who chiefly determine what supplies shall be put at the disposal of Unrra, and, as a natural consequence, have the chief say in how the charter of Unrra is to be interpreted and how the supplies shall be distributed.

Mr. Taylor must be more innocent, or have a more charitable disposition, than I, if he believes, for instance, that the pouring of Unrra supplies into Greece (about eight times what the rest of the Balkans were getting), as contrasted with the miserable trickle of supplies that, until a terrific row had been made about the matter, were sent to Yugoslavia, had nothing to do with the respective political attitudes of the British Government to their protégés in Greece and to the "Reds" in Yugoslavia. As regards the former, Mr. Taylor probably also knows the story of the great olive oil ramp: Greece, which normally produces nearly 40,000 tons of olive oil per annum, suddenly found herself without it, because the supplies were being hoarded by innumerable profiteering middlemen all over Greece. The Finance Minister, Mr. Varvaressos, sent a S.O.S. to the British Government saying that his programme of economic reforms was in danger, and that he would be out unless something were done to help him. Whereupon Unrra—of course uninfluenced according to its charter by any political consideration—made frantic efforts all round the Mediterranean, and succeeded in scraping together a few thousand tons for Greece in the hope (a vain one) of thereby breaking the black market monopoly in olive oil and saving Mr. Varvaressos.

The truth is that there is more dirty work in Uno and Unrra than is dreamed of in the philosophy of many good Labour folk, or, it seems, of good Unrra officials.

Finally, as regards Dr. Krnjevic's remarks, I did not forget either the peasants or the small States. But the peasant parties in Europe now are in the Left-Centre coalitions, except in so far as, for instance, in Poland or Germany, they are "infiltrated" by reactionaries from the old parties, who generally operate with a clerical ideology and are (again as in Poland) largely composed of lawyers and other townsfolk who do not know one end of a cow from the other. I suspect that Dr. Krnjevic, who leads the Croat peasants from the Athenæum, has his political future many years behind him, and is just one more of the army of political ghosts who represent strictly nobody but themselves.

The one thing the peoples of Europe long for is an Anglo-Soviet agreement, for that is the only basis on which the small nations in Europe can have any influence and feel secure. The Western Bloc policy drives them to despair.

But it is a policy that is welcomed not only by the Tories in this country, but also by the emigrés, the Fascist underground, and the black international, the unholy trinity of clericalism, militarism and big business in Europe. K. ZILLIACUS

SIR,—It seems to me that the great stress put upon the vote of Social-Democrats against fusion with the Communists misses the main point Germany must be set on the road to democracy and independence. This can only be safely achieved by removing those factors which have been responsible for the growth of Nazism in the past. Most people will nowadays agree that the principal factors were the anti-democratic activities of the monopoly capitalists and Junkers, and the disunity between the two big working-class parties. To remove the danger of Nazism means to prevent the recurrence of these circumstances. This is exactly what the Russians are trying to do in their zone by splitting up the estates of the Junkers, by nationalising basic industries, and by advocating the fusion of the Social-Democratic and the Communist Parties.

To ask the members of the Social-Democratic

Party whether they like such a fusion or not may be interesting as a study of the psychology of the German working-class; but their opinion is as irrelevant to the desirability of the step as the opinion of the Junkers with regard to land reform or the opinion of Nazis to the dissolution of the Nazi party. To create a united working-class party in Germany is one of the essential steps in the fight against Nazism. And all sincere democrats should stop discussing *whether* it should be done and get down to the important question *how* it is to be done.

In this connection it is worth pointing out that while a lot has been said about the majority vote against fusion, very little has been heard about the 62 per cent. majority in favour of close co-operation with the Communists. Yet Kingsley Martin tells us in his German Diary that Dr. Schumacher is violently anti-Communist. Have the British Military Authorities gone to the same pains as they did in their anti-fusion efforts to replace Dr. Schumacher by a leader who would be capable of fulfilling the wishes of the 62 per cent. of the S.P. members?

Once again it seems that anti-Communism is regarded as more important than the drive for Democracy and Socialism, and the mistakes of the Weimar Republic seem to await repetition. Too weak to stand on its own feet, the Social-Democratic Party, under a picked anti-Communist leadership, will once again come to terms with the democratically-posing Conservative forces. Are they again going to defend Democracy, as they tried before, with the Zentrum Party rather than with the Communists? That Zentrum Party, the newspapers tell us, is now growing considerably in Westphalia under the slogan "For God and Fatherland." They are at least tactful enough to leave out the Emperor.

KARO

PALESTINE

SIR,—Before the stentorian voice of "politics" completely drowns everything else in discussions on Palestine, readers of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION may be interested to hear about one or two facts which appeared in Memoranda submitted to the Anglo-American Committee by the economic experts of the Jewish Agency. Gloomy predictions galore have been made in the past by a variety of soothsayers about what could, or could not, be achieved by way of agricultural and industrial development in Palestine. *This* was not possible, *that* was out of the question, and the *other*, simply unthinkable. But here are the facts.

Jewish agricultural settlements increased from 71 in 1922 to 265 in 1945. The cultivated area was doubled. Through intensive farming and scientific methods, the yield per dunam (quarter of an acre) and livestock unit grew in a marked degree. The average wheat yield per dunam rose from 75 kgs. in 1927 to 120 kgs. in 1936, and of barley from 113 kgs. to 180 kgs., i.e. an increase of about 60 per cent. Average yield per milch cow was almost doubled—from 2,150 litres to 4,190 litres; while the yield per laying hen increased by 40 per cent. (from 98 eggs to 138). The total irrigated crop (including citrus) increased 22 times since 1922. These facts seem worth rescuing from oblivion in a world whose most urgent cry is for food and still more food.

Between 1925 and 1945 the expectancy of life of Moslem Arabs increased from 37 years to 48 years. This took place continuously and concurrently with an increase in the proportion of the Jewish population within the total population of Palestine. The Moslems' expectation of life (48) compares favourably with 33 in Egypt and 27 in Iraq.

One other interesting point. Several attempts have been made to estimate the comparative productive capacity of irrigated and unirrigated land—a problem of some importance in considering future absorptive capacity. Professor Elari-Volcani, of the Agricultural Research Station, Rehovot, gives an estimate showing that whereas from the average *fellah's* farm of 100 dunams (unirrigated) the net annual income is approximately £30, this increases to £80 if only 20 dunams of irrigated land are utilised. Thus on one-fifth of the area of a standard unirrigated farm a fellah could, by the use of irrigation, secure a considerable improvement of his standard of living. The cultivated mixed farming area in Jewish possession (excluding citrus), incidentally, is 600,000 dunams as against 6,600,000 in Arab possession.

26 Fairfield Road, N.8. ROSALIE GASSMAN

GREEK ELECTIONS

SIR,—May I use some of your column space to record a protest against the preliminary report of A.M.F.O.G.E. recently published in the press?

It is reported that the Greek elections were conducted "under conditions that warranted holding them on the date selected"; that they were "on the whole free and fair"; and that the results represented "a true and valid verdict of the Greek people." I find it difficult to reconcile these broad and generous headlines with such qualifying statements as the report also contains. It states, for example, that if the Left-wing parties, which boycotted the election, had taken part, there would be perhaps up to a 25 per cent. representation of those parties in the parliament; that some intimidation by both Right and Left took place; that intimidation in the year preceding the election, particularly marked against extreme Leftists in the Peloponnese and in N.W. Greece, had important bearing on the abstention of E.A.M. members from voting; and that some of the gendarmerie had Right-wing bias.

Even were these qualifications not considerable understatements, it is surely unreasonable to say, as is said in the report, that they "had no material effect on the general outcome." How possibly can boycott, intimidation and bias exist side by side with fairness, freedom, truth and validity? Are these the conditions which warranted holding the elections on the date selected? Or do "conditions" mean perhaps other and more weighty political considerations, on the international plane?

That the election day was peaceful and orderly, and bore comparison with past Greek elections, as the report states, is hardly surprising. Four factors combined to ensure this. The first was the continued presence of British troops (which the report cheerfully states had no effect on the election); the second was the British-trained, Right-wing biased gendarmerie. The third and fourth factors were the presence of A.M.F.O.G.E. and the nature of the existing laws relating to voting procedure. Just as the former rendered undesirable the more violent forms of electioneering, so the latter made them unnecessary, by offering magnificent loopholes against real secrecy of voting; pre-election "suggestions" combined with threats of a post-election beating-up were usually adequate.

The stage for the election farce was set long before A.M.F.O.G.E. arrived. The mission ensured by its simple presence that the electioneering for a month prior to the elections, and the actual voting, were both relatively peaceful; it produced a report, the principal value of which lay in the information given concerning the electoral lists, for the inadequacy of which it quite rightly laid the blame on administrative inefficiency and not on deliberate fraud. By this were disproved the more extravagant accusations made about them.

By comparison with the average Balkan elections, past and present, the recent Greek elections were probably fairer than most. They were not, however, the free elections which were once promised to the Greek people. To ascribe to them an importance and validity such as is implied in the A.M.F.O.G.E. report is misleading and harmful.

C.M.F. OBSERVER, A.M.F.O.G.E.

MALTEVINA

SIR,—As one of the first people to have the opportunity of tasting "Maltevina," I was much interested in the reference in your "German Diary" to the use in Germany of this ingenious and agreeable

The Big Three

United States
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A REMINDER

The first contest will close on June 30th, 1946. No extension of this closing date will be permitted but all entries postmarked June 30th will be accepted for the first contest. The second contest will open on July 1st, 1946, and will close on June 30th, 1947.

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concoction. Perhaps it may be of interest to fill in some of the gaps in the earlier part of the story. "Maltevina" was, after several disappointments, successfully produced in Rome in the latter part of 1944 by Mr. Ward Perkins, the well-known relief worker, with the willing and intelligent assistance of a firm of Italian brewers and chemists of the University of Rome. It was successfully used on relief work in Italy before the war in Europe ended. In the autumn of 1945 it was submitted to the office of the Chancellor of the Duchy by Mr. Ward Perkins with a view to its use in Germany. Last November I saw Mr. Hynd and on the basis of my own knowledge of the product urged him to try Maltevina out in the British Zone. I am glad to hear this is being done, and I hope that due credit will be given both to Mr. Ward Perkins and to his Italian fellow workers.

JOHN BOYD-CARPENTER

House of Commons.

R.A.F. STRIKES

SIR,—Your paragraph on victimisation after the R.A.F. strikes leads me to point out that highly questionable methods are the stock-in-trade of the S.I.B. It may be accidental that their actual function is swathed in mystery, but they are regarded by the rank and file with a mixture of fear and loathing. Ordinary Service Policemen are "Snoops," the S.I.B. invariably "The Gestapo."

I served on a Middle East unit of the R.A.F. where the atrocious food eventually brought about a sit-down strike. Shortly afterwards a new corporal arrived in the workshops. His sympathy with the more articulate portion of the sitters-down (mostly Communists) was marked, and he was quickly accepted. Later on all the extremists were posted to Aden (a much dreaded spot), and the accuracy with which they were chosen puzzled us until the corporal left us suddenly. He returned to the S.I.B. of which he was a member.

2 Roundwood Cottages, R. E. LOUNDS
Rotherham.

EDWARD THOMPSON

SIR,—The sad news of the death of Edward Thompson will be mourned by all Indians and especially by those who were privileged to know him. He was a true friend of India. Not only through his books, but by his many writings in various British journals, Edward Thompson served the cause of India's freedom truly and consistently. His knowledge of Indian history, culture, languages and institutions gave him a correct insight at all times into the mind of political India which he was never tired of explaining to his countrymen. I remember a Nehru birthday meeting in London a couple of years ago. Thompson made a most effective and moving appeal for the release of political prisoners and for meeting India's constitutional demands. He was severely ill at that time, but that did not stop him from making a journey to London specially for this meeting. Such was his zeal for the cause of freedom. His efforts for India will always be remembered by my countrymen and his memory will be cherished by us as one of the architects of the New and Free India. It is well to remember that he was very definitely opposed to the idea of Pakistan.

16 Turl St., Oxford D. M. SEN

MIHAILOVITCH

SIR,—Lt.-Commander Harpet, in your issue of April 20th, states, most circumstantially, that he possesses a poster put up by the Germans in December, 1945, and dated November 12th, 1945, offering rewards for both Tito and Mihailovitch. Brigadier MacLean has already commented on this letter, but it may be worth pointing out that the war had been over for more than six months at the earlier of these dates.

J. M. BURNETT

CRIME DETECTION

SIR,—May I suggest that the "British Officer" who wrote the article "Crime Detection in the East" knows nothing whatsoever about the work or methods of the Indian Police?

The "Detection" story is as old as the European in India. It is told with variations: the dinner plates, blackened with soot and one plate left clean. Or, the tumblers of water with one tumbler filled with milk which the thief will not drink, always portraying the ingenuity of the story-teller.

But to a British officer who was once Commandant of the Indian Police, never in ten years' service with that proud corps did I find a case of "insidious blackmail," or that the police were "loathed" by the local or city folk of Calcutta. One case only I had of beating-up.

A young man was arrested for cutting his sweetheart's nose with a knife. She was very pretty. I had gone down to the police station to see them both. I asked to see the girl's nose, and saw, as she removed her sari, that half of the left nostril had been cut away. "Where is this man?" I said. A nonchalant young gallant stood forth, saying: "I did it." My escort constable hit him a punch, flush on the jaw. I have regretted since that I, too, had not hit the culprit flush on the jaw.

The constable, for one flash of temper in his whole police career, was dismissed the service.

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WARTIME MINERS

SIR,—Those men who, while still in the Forces, volunteered to work in the mines have had good reason to regret their choice. Although other wartime miners (volunteers, optants and ballotees) have a release group number based on age and length of service, those entrants who came out of the Forces will have to remain until the Essential Work Order is removed from the industry. Thus has arisen the curious anomaly that if a "Bevin Boy" subsequently joins the Forces both types of service count towards his release, while those who do the same thing in a reverse order, having already spent perhaps five or six years away from their own work, have before them an indefinite and probably lengthy period as a mine worker.

While no doubt it is advisable to interfere with the Government's release scheme as little as possible, a special situation has arisen in the coal industry owing to the direction of labour to the mines under both the National Service Act and the Essential Work Order. These men were given no indication when they volunteered that their ultimate release might be delayed; in the circumstances it would be unfortunate to create the impression that advantage is being taken of their failure to understand the conditions of service. It would be a simple matter, involving no question of principle, to arrange for their release with the group they would have been in had they remained in the Services, and so end a situation which is both illogical and unequitable.

KENNETH SPELMAN

119 Newstead Colliery,
Nottingham.

RENT RESTRICTION

SIR,—As a director of a small business in Manchester I recently received an intimation from the landlords who own the building we occupy demanding an increase in our rent of 50 per cent. On taking legal advice we learn we have no redress as business premises are not protected by the Rent Restrictions Act.

From articles in the local press and from inquiries made amongst other small firms it would appear that there is a general movement on the part of rapacious landlords, who are taking advantage of course, of the serious shortage of accommodation, to raise rents wherever they can. If this movement is allowed to spread unchecked much anxiety and distress will be caused amongst small business men and others affected by it.

It would seem, therefore, that some change in the Rent Restrictions Act is very desirable.

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JONATHAN CAPE

BOOKS IN GENERAL

It is the right of the traveller, in his sedentary years, to retire on his capital and to utter aphorisms. Over the ordinary creative writer he has advantages; for though we have lost our susceptibility to wonder, even to wisdom, we may still find pleasure in nostalgic evocation. There is only one point to reserve: that when the traveller is a wit, a scholar, a hedonist and a prose writer of exquisite conscience, when, indeed, he is Mr. Norman Douglas, we cannot expect the whole of his quality to be contained in the gnomic utterance. And so the *Almanac** (which he has assembled by allotting, with charming fortuitousness, quotations from his works to the days in the year) gives us a view of his urbane philosophy, and, what is more, an impulse to reopen or happily for the first time to explore the books from which they are taken; but we cannot cry: "Look in the Almanac!" and hope to find too much of Mr. Douglas. It was collected, one would like to think, according to the ideal formula that he gives in *Birds and Beasts of the Greek Anthology*:

> under some vine-leaved arbour, with the necessary books at one's elbow, and one's soul at ease. . . . Such a thing, it is obvious, should be a holiday performance; written *con amore* and not otherwise; in reverential, playfully-erudite fashion.

The subjects range from forests to conjugal infidelity; sometimes the choice is a piece of donnish humour:

> I have been perusing Seneca's letters. He was a cocoa drinker masquerading as an ancient,

sometimes an aesthetic evaluation:

> It is the test of beauty and vitality that a beholder refuses to acquiesce at first glance. There is a conflict to be undergone.

But while these observations, *pensées* rather than maxims, suggest an agreeable, often inspired egocentric, a humanist and epicurean, of Mr. Douglas's descriptive power in wider horizons there is little indication.

Reading about other people's exertions is, like watching them, a characteristic English taste, and since the sixteenth century this country has not lacked a fine but steady stream of men who have made journeys and recorded them. Of all writers, these are the least professional, the most independent and individual. Douglas, an isolated figure, belongs with these originals; not to the purposeful band with a mission such as evangelism, slave trading, prospecting; he is of the leisurely kind, not a stranger but a guest in all countries, even his own; observing, tasting life, not chained to it. "Whoever wants to save time," he states, "is not fit for the society of gentlemen." For Mr. Douglas is never in a hurry, like his predecessor in the Nooks and By-ways of Italy, the Reverend Craufurd Tait Ramage, LL.D., who "ran all over the country with a top hat and an umbrella, copying inscriptions," and of whom you may read in *Alone*. He has Sterne's trick of recording emotions which he does not choose to experience, but he is at home where Sterne was a stranger. He travels over the same ways as Childe Harold, and at times with the same grand manner, but pleasurable experience never surfeits him, and he does not suffer from the melancholy illusion of feeling born out of his time. The noble intensity of Doughty is inconsistent with his philosophy. Borrow's taste for the wild parts of familiar Europe he shares, as well as his liking for esoteric studies and curious information, but Mr. Douglas, whatever he may record, is not, himself, in the picaresque tradition. He is never more than lightly involved in his own adventures. When a scene, a person, a diet becomes tiresome, he moves away. The Jsopel Berners episode would have been, with him, impossible. He is the dilettante, the amateur, the gentleman traveller; a man such as Beckford, who, in the last hundred years, has become almost an anachronism. With Horace Walpole, another of his kind, he feels a profound sympathy. "How one yearns, nowadays," he observes in *Alone*, "for that spacious and playful outlook; or, better still, for some altogether Golden Age, where everybody is corrupt and delightful and has nothing whatever to do, and does it well."

Thus Mr. Douglas, because he is driven by no necessity, can follow here and there a natural bent for scholarship which, in a man less concerned with the art of living, might have developed into pedantry. There is in him a good deal of Mr. Ernest Eames, B.A., who annotated the chronicles of Nepenthe in *South Wind*. But whereas acquiring erudition is within the power of a number of people, the gift of presenting it with graceful and deceptive lightness is not. *Old Calabria* is rich in quaint researches and speculations; I would instance the discourses on the flying monk, Joseph of Copertino; on dragons; on the colour sense of the Calabrians—this is particularly interesting. *London Street Games*, an early essay, is, not only in its subject but in its fascinating treatment, an unusual book. The digressions on mythology and hagiology, on minerals, beasts and reptiles, are part of the quality of such works as *Old Calabria*, *Alone*, *Together*, *Fountains in the Sand*. In *South Wind* the characters include authorities on these various subjects, and their conversation, which carries the philosophy of the book, is based often on their particular knowledge.

Curiosity can be for Mr. Douglas a stronger draw even than comfort (but not stronger than the pleasures of the table); he must investigate a legend; he must climb a mountain that interrupts his landscape. "There is no eminence in the land, from Etna and the Gran Sasso downwards, whose appeal I can resist." It is not inconsistent that a man so impatient of any compulsion outside his own whim, so free from conventional and emotional fetters, should be a hater of dungeons and barriers. "Wherever there are enclosing walls, there are abuses behind them." Men raise walls round their own free spirits, he suggests: work, suffering, conscience, duty. "The ideal citizen," he asserts, "is not the ideal man." "Why bear a Cross? Is it pleasant? Is it pretty?" Personal obligations are as deplorable. He is never at a loss for a friend or companion, whether an oddity such as Maurice Magnus (the introduction to whose *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion* gives a revealing glimpse of Douglas as seen by D. H. Lawrence), or one of a succession of Theocritean goat-boys, whose dear wish is to go to America; but rootless and detached ("All sentimentalists are criminals!") he changes his company with his path.

This is the man; the writer has a stricter ethic. There is nothing painful or precious about his choice of words; it seems, like many of his actions, fortunate and direct—the sculptor's blow on the marble. "He is the favourite of the Gods," Douglas says, "who knows the right word and when to utter it." Read his description of the spiky agave, from *Alone*:

> You would say it had been cast in some dull blue metal. The glaucous wonder stands by itself, a prodigy of good style. . . . It is flawless. Vainly have I teased my fancy, endeavouring to discover the slightest defect in shape and hue. Firm-seated on the turf, in exultant pose, with a pallid virginal bloom upon those mighty writhing leaves, this plant has drawn me like a magnet, day after day, to drink deep draughts of contentment from its exquisite lines.

The sensual-aesthetic clarity of this is the mark of his descriptive writing, and makes it possible to turn again to the travel books when the dazzling humour of *South Wind* is not acceptable. He notes everything in his scene with equal vividness, the blue mass of gentians, the white and terrifying sand of the desert: "Unlike the living ocean, this withered one never smiles," this description begins. Or his theme may be more elusive, a vapour, yet it rises almost palpably from the page:

> The country visits you here. It comes in the wake of that evening breeze which creeps about with stealthy feet, winding its way into the most secluded courtyards and sending a sudden shiver through the frail bamboos that stand beside your dinner table in some heated square. Then the zephyr departs mysteriously as it came, and leaves behind a great void—a torrid vacuum which is soon filled up by the honey-sweet fragrance of hay and aromatic plants. Every night this balsamic breath invades the town, filling its streets with ambrosial suggestions. It is one of the charms of Rome at this particular season; and quite a local speciality, for the phenomenon could never occur if the surrounding regions were covered with suburbs or filth or woodland—were aught save what they are: a desert whose vegetation of coarse herbage is in the act of withering. The Campagna once definitely dried, this immaterial feast is at an end.

"Whether consciously or not," he says, "we cannot but be influenced by the *colour-effects* of mere words, that arouse in us definite but undefinable moods of mind." See in this passage how the light catches the eye, and how the youth, the jewel and the river, caught at one particular moment, become interdependent images:

> Your Florentine of the humbler sort loves to dawdle along the bank on a bright afternoon, watching the play of the river, and drawing a kind of philosophic contentment out of its cool aquatic humours. Presently he reaches that bridge—the jewellers' bridge. He thinks he must buy a ring. Be sure the stone will reflect the Arno in one of its moods. I will wager he selects a translucent chrysoprase set in silver, a cheap and stubborn gem whose frigidly uncompromising hue appeals in mysterious fashion to his own temperament.

The words glitter on the page. Is the effect meretricious? No more so than the Mediterranean scenery itself appears at times to the Gothic eye.

South Wind is the best known and most popular of his books, and it is a brilliant achievement. After an interval of years it is as delicately amoral, as salt in its wit, as marmoreal in its style as on the first reading; but embodying as it does the whole of Douglas's range of manner and subject, it seems to put a stop to any further novel from this author; the thing could not be done a second time. Like the volcanic soil of Nepenthe, it is sterile. Much of the material can be found in *Old Calabria*, the saints, for instance, and the historical unearthings, but the imaginative process which raises these things to a plane of invention also distorts them at times to the point of caricature.

Most of Mr. Douglas's works are the product of his maturity and so show the complete, not the changing man. Even in his autobiographical book, *Looking Back*, he writes with entire indifference to chronology, to people whom he has known; all are appraised by the same ageless, wicked, Horatian eye, though some are the friends of his childhood and some are of recent meeting. This unvarying ripeness may be a limitation, for if you do not like one book you will not like the next. If they do please you, you will not regret his consistent if restricted quality, only that the impulse to write has in him been so erratic and occasional. Not that he gives the impression of caring for the common reader's opinion. In style and mood he belongs, one might say, to the silver age, voluptuous and godless. In one of his most characteristic moments he describes a lizard, creature of sunlight, which he sees fallen into a damp and gloomy cistern; its tail has grown long with disuse, and it drags out its days on a stone projecting through the water. Mr. Douglas observes his fellows as sensitively and with as much detachment; to alter circumstance is not his *métier*. Suffering is vulgar, to be avoided by the civilised man. To-day's discomfort is acceptable only as to-morrow's epigram. We may be forgiven for wondering if the epigram still consoles the sufferers of modern Calabria, not to mention places less favoured by the sun. Are they still assured by his assurance that, "Everything will become legend, if the gentleman will have the goodness to wait"?

NAOMI LEWIS

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A RARE POET

A Map of Verona. By HENRY REED. *Cape.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Henry Reed is a rare poet, in more senses than one. He writes very little; that little is highly finished and exactly chosen. The first poem of his that hooked my attention was a parody sent in for a NEW STATESMAN AND NATION competition during the blitz. "As we get older we do not get any younger . . ." Sentence followed sentence with a shining aptitude. No doubt the reader will remember *Chard Whitlow* or will have encountered it since in anthologies: here was the latter-day Eliot in person, with surprised eyebrows, caught, let us say, by the mild torture of the barber's chair. Such parody startles and enhances. It displaced in my mind several poems I was trying at the time to carry round—more serious poems, but then the fun of *Chard Whitlow* was never a shade out. Obviously Mr. Reed, or "H.R." as he was on that occasion, had forgotten more than we had ever learnt from Eliot, and if there was another side to this mockery, his work should turn out remarkably.

It did. The next poem that came my way was the first of three pieces collected now under the title *Lessons of the War*. They weren't at all the kind of lessons one is supposed to learn; not rhetorical, not even bored; ironically protesting rather, for the inattention of the conscript listening to his instructor picked its way easily out from the reiterated official phrases. *Naming of Parts* transfers the intonation of the drill-hall to the Spring flowering beyond the window.

> To-day we have naming of parts. Yesterday
> We had daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,
> We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,
> To-day we have naming of parts. Japonica
> Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring
> gardens,
> And to-day we have naming of parts.
>
> This is the lower sling swivel. And this
> Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,
> When you are given your slings. And this is the
> piling swivel,
> Which in your case you have not got. The branches
> Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
> Which in our case we have not got . . .

So, by ambiguities that in later verses raise the *double entendre* to the plane of metaphysical wit, the Small Arms Manual—deadly to human beings long before they reach the battlefield—is made to yield its lyric of sex and Spring. The same situation inspires the two companion pieces, *Judging Distances* and *Unarmed Combat* which except for the slumping last verse of all juggle feelingly as does no English poetry I can think of since Marvell's. Circumstances, one imagines, developed in Mr. Reed this curious high balance (what a poor soldier he must have made!) but the earlier and later poems in *A Map of Verona* show the attitude as ingrained. Oblique and candid, divulging yet holding back, he offers us the landscapes, emotions, situations we know while keeping perhaps a final interpretation in reserve. (The world has proffered a war, a Small Arms Manual.) Verona, "whence my dreams and slightest movements rise," pored over in maps and one day to be visited; the lovers, lying forehead to forehead, abstracted from time like the Eastern landscape, without shadow or reflection, hung overhead; the lately discovered wall round which two gardens, two lives, intertwine; the fugitive from nightmare in the autumn of 1939; the harbour towns where sailors loiter, separate, and grow restless for the coming voyage that shall justify all others; the shadow of King Mark rising in sunlit ruins at Tintagel; Philoctetes nursing his wound, stretching out for his bow—these are the situations, some more immediate than others, upon which Mr. Reed lays his stress and pattern. It is a very particular pattern, finely articulated in a phrase—

> But you can cage the wood.
> You can throw up fences, as round a recalcitrant heart
> Spring up remonstrances . . .
>
> The hesitation before a memory,
> The stumbling thought by which we recognise
> That pain is already here, but is still beyond our feeling. . . .
>
> The blackened sand
> Cracks into arid chasms and fissures, crumbles,
> The vegetation shrivels, seeds from the chattering pod
> Fall in the dust.

—and the longer passage, the whole poem, rises to a calm eloquence. Tintagel:

> Tristram's tower
> Rises and falls and rises.
>
> The ruin leads your thoughts
> Past the moments of darkness when silence fell over the hall,
> And the only sound rising was the sound of frightened breathing,
> Past the lies and pursuits, the arraignments and accusations,
> To the perpetually recurring story,
>
> The doorway open, either in the soft green weather,
> The gulls seen over the purple-threaded sea, the cliffs,
> Or open in mist,
> The gulls heard over and under you in the greyness—
> This time or that, but always the doorway open,
> And through the broken stones the forbidden courtyard,
> And under the archway, ever, ever,
> Bold in clear weather or halting through the mist,
> The eternal reappearance of Iseult . . .

Even a casual reader will distinguish there—in the measured beauty of diction, the lapping rhythms, the pivotal clauses (as elsewhere in a certain secrecy and primness)—not the imitator indeed, but the inheritor from T. S. Eliot. The difference between them is that the younger poet, hardly less mature and assured in his beginning, has turned the corner of satire sooner: one parody, the equivocal war poems, and he's off. Where he will go to one can't tell, but all the hints seem to be here of larger work. Already Mr. Reed has a mastery of the blank-verse line as extended by Eliot. He is drawn to legend (his Philoctetes is as beautifully distinct as his Tristram). He slips the handcuffs of the present with the ease of a Houdini. Well then! . . . In the meantime, buy, borrow, read, read again this remarkable first volume.

G. W. STONIER

THE LOAN

The Washington Loan Agreements: A Critical Study of American Foreign Economic Policy. By the RT. HON. L. S. AMERY, C.H. *Macdonald.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Amery, as a devout believer in empire economic unity, the sterling area, and a managed monetary and fiscal policy, is naturally all out against the conditions attached to the American Loan and the Trade Proposals to which the British Government was forced to express its adherence before the American negotiators would agree to commend the Loan to Congress. His arguments, as set forth in this book, follow familiar lines: indeed, they are very largely the same arguments as were put forward in this journal before Parliament accepted the Loan conditions. The only serious difference is that Mr. Amery attaches much more importance to tariffs in general and empire preferences in particular, and proportionately less to State trading through bulk sale and purchase arrange-

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KEGAN PAUL

ments. This difference, however, is not more than secondary in relation to the matter in hand. Mr. Amery has no difficulty in showing that the pretence that we are not being forced back on to the gold standard under the Bretton Woods Plan is merely a pretence, or that the Loan terms are likely to prove unworkable if our hands are tied in respect of commercial agreements with empire or other countries, or again that the proposed regulations of international trade are entirely irrational and unworkable in themselves, as well as irreconcilable with any sort of planned economic system based on the maintenance of full employment.

Mr. Amery, having made this comprehensive onslaught on American economic policy, goes on to deal with the argument that it was necessary for Great Britain to accept any terms, no matter how onerous or absurd, that the United States might be minded to impose, because we simply *had* to have the American Loan to tide us over our immediate import difficulties. His answer on this issue is somewhat cavalier: he does not really attempt to show how we could have done without the American Loan without very serious hardship. Indeed, he could not have shown this, because it is not the case. The truth, which he implies but avoids stating in all its starkness, is that it might have been much better, not only for ourselves, but for the world as a whole, to face these hardships, however severe they might have been for a time. By not facing them, we encouraged the Americans in their delusion that it is practicable for them to pile up exports without admitting imports, to impress their own financial hegemony on the world by being "tough," without ever facing up to the real condition of a progressive system of international exchange, and to make even a Socialist-ruled Britain part of an economic ring round the Soviet state-trading economy.

Mr. Amery, I think rightly, sees American behaviour in connection with the loan, not as an isolated expression of tough-guy dollar economic diplomacy, but as the culmination of a consistent policy which the American State Department has been forming for a considerable number of years—a policy directed especially against the British Empire, but also in a wider sense against the establishment anywhere in the world of any economic unit strong enough to stand up to the United States on equal terms. I do not follow him in his fervid admiration for the Ottawa Agreements, or in his apparent belief that it would have been a perfectly simple matter to keep the sterling area working successfully in face of strong American hostility. But I feel sure his main arguments are sound and that, at almost any immediate cost, it would have been better to avoid entering into commitments which we are most unlikely to be able to carry out—and which, in any event, run directly counter to any kind of economic planning for home consumption and to the interests of stable progress in the world as a whole.

G. D. H. COLE

GERMANY AND EUROPE

Confusion of Faces. By ERICH MEISSNER. *Faber.* 10s. 6d.

1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals. By L. B. NAMIER. *Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford.* 10s. 6d.

According to Mr. Meissner, National Socialism was the German response to an economic and political crisis that found the nation without spiritual reserves, and that what is true of the Nazi movement can also be said of other powerful tendencies throughout Europe. For the outstanding fact about the last four centuries of European history has been the growing secularisation of life. This process has steadily undermined society and has at last begun to show its real face. We have been too rash in calling our material achievements "progress": on the whole, these advances have been negative in character, and "Modern Man has been the loser" by them. As a result, when the Nazis appeared on the scene, the German middle classes could quote Goethe and Schiller, but their secularism could not provide a moral code strong enough to resist the temptations of a demagogue who promised to restore them to their old position of comfort and privilege. Mr. Meissner considers it significant that the only successful repudiation of National Socialism was theological rather than secular. "The self-confident promoters of enlightenment" should have listened to the Papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, "a document of truly pastoral solicitude."

This would seem to suggest that Mr. Meissner's commentary upon the struggle between religion and secularism in German history—and, to some extent, in Europe as a whole—is aimed at debunking the liberal and rationalist interpretation of history. But, as I understand his analysis, it seems equally destructive of institutional religion, at least in its Protestant expression. It may be true that men now live in a spiritual vacuum: neither Germany nor Europe appears to have been a much better place when men did not, as Mr. Meissner admits. Throughout this book, however, Mr. Meissner appears to be sniping at the underlying assumptions of democracy, though he is chary of rejecting them outright. Metternich, who here appears as a "liberator" of Europe who has been unjustly treated by the historians, was right, says Mr. Meissner, in taking a stand against the French Revolution, "believing it to be a malady of the body politic that might befall any nation and turn out fatal if no cure were attempted." At that time, the "world was still sufficiently sure of itself and rose in defence." Mr. Meissner also seems to deplore the way the revolutionary leaders brought the masses of the people into political activity, for it introduced "the element of unrest and incompetence which turned the political workshop into an arena." And Mr. Meissner suggests, part of the tragedy of Europe is that the Prussian rather than the Austrian eagle came to dominate Germany, for Austria would have imparted her civilised "lack of zeal" to the greater unit and Metternich's desire for "tranquillity" would have been satisfied.

At one point Mr. Meissner concedes that his thesis cannot be offered as a strictly historical conjecture, and that it is supported by persuasion for which the evidence is either inadequate or contradictory. This may be the explanation of the extraordinary difficulty that I found in keeping track of his central argument. In the first two chapters, which are extremely interesting studies of the Reformation and the Religious Wars, his argument advances clearly and logically. Elsewhere I have had to read some passages three times in order to see their relevance. For although Mr. Meissner has a number of shrewd comments to make, his style is kaleidoscopic and discursive. He is too prone to wander off after a point and fail to return to his brief. Though his book is not difficult to read, it does not leave a clear impression on the reader. His chief argument—that secularism has eroded the link between social tradition and the spiritual integrity of the individual, and that the "towering prison" of the Totalitarian State is the epitome of secularism—is certainly put forward sharply in the last few pages. But, Mr. Meissner tells us, the reader, not the author, must draw any necessary conclusion from the suggestion that secular authority is the result of disillusion rather than the answer to it.

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Raleigh History Lecture for 1944—deals with one facet of it at almost equal length. This extremely erudite discussion of selected aspects of the 1848 Revolution concentrates on the policy of revolutionary Germany towards the national claims of the Poles in Posnania. It says little about the domestic story of the German Revolution or about France and Italy. It is marked by an undoubted bias against the Germans—the "professorial lambs of Frankfort, who, bitten by the Pan-German dog, caught rabies," and it suggests that latter-day liberals have spun a legend around 1848 which Hitler blindly accepted. Otherwise, he might well have found a great deal to extol in the *deutsche Männer und Freunde* of the Frankfort Assembly."

Although one can do nothing but admire Professor Namier's lavish documentation, it is necessary to point out that in spite of its comprehensive title, this essay does not pretend to be an examination of the origins and general course of the 1848 revolution. It does not, in fact, convince one that it was a "revolution of intellectuals." But it is a useful addition to the literature on 1848 in English, of which we still have far too little.

NORMAN MACKENZIE

NEW NOVELS

Titus Groan. By MERVYN PEAKE. *Eyre and Spottiswoode.* 15*s.*

Three. By WILLIAM SANSOM. *Hogarth.* 8*s. 6d.*

The Gipsy's Baby. By ROSAMOND LEHMANN. *Collins.* 7*s. 6d.*

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. By VLADIMIR NABOKOV. *Poetry London.* 8*s. 6d.*

In the face of *Titus Groan* I feel like a soldier who has sworn so much that he has no words left with which to describe the act of shame. I mean that I should like to describe the book as *fascinating*, but the semantic of the word has become so disgustingly eroded that it is inconceivable that it any longer conveys any meaning. I am therefore forced to say that Mr. Peake's first novel holds one with its glittering eye. It begins by saying: Part One: Gormenghast. No part two is discoverable throughout the entire length of the book (well over four hundred modern pages) and the hero is much younger even than Tristram Shandy by the time the book ends; he has in fact not spoken up to that point. The reader is left to anticipate further volumes. I hope they will come; I do not think I have ever so much enjoyed a novel sent to me for review.

The book, which is about the ancient family of Groan, who live in a vast castle in an unidentifiable landscape and at an unnamed time, is as nearly pure story-telling as any book I have read since childhood. I admit that every now and then I was uneasily conscious that by the contrast of the megalomaniac aristocrats and the hut-dwellers at their gates, a contemporary contrast might be adumbrated; and the internal struggle for power inside the castle itself might also "imply" something. But I shut these thoughts out as often as I could, and chide myself for being a victim of the intellectual inhibitions of my time. In any case even a Marxist might find so riotous an embellishment of his favourite themes a little frivolous.

The emphasis of the story lies principally in the machinations of the intelligent upstart, Steerpike, who escapes from the kitchens of Gormenghast and the domination of the loathsome cook, Swelter, and becomes the assistant of the castle doctor, Prunesquallor. He worms his way into the trust of the neglected twin sister of Lord Sepulchrave, and incites them to set fire to his lordship's library. Sepulchrave, "whose days are like a rook's nest with every twig a duty," leads a melancholic life, attending to a ritual traditionally planned for him, its origins lost in the mist of centuries; the fire accelerates his decline into insanity, and Titus, at the age of one, succeeds to the earldom. The book concludes with the ceremony of the "earling": a disturbing occasion for Titus's family and retainers, for Titus throws the sacred insignia into the lake on which the ceremony takes place, and turns his attention to the bastard infant daughter of Keda, a hut-dweller who has been his wet-nurse. On this provocative note the first instalment ends; I look forward eagerly to its later developments.

Titus Groan, though long and Gothically detailed, is not wayward; it has a genuine plot in the strictest sense, and it persuades you to read on simply in order to know what will happen; in spite of its setting, there is nothing particularly dream-like about it. Its gallery of characters is wonderful. The old nurse, Nannie Slagg, appears oftener than can be easily put up with, and the mysterious Keda, with her two lovers who kill each other, is not a success: she recalls, rather strongly, Meriam, the hired girl in *Cold Comfort Farm*; though her part in the action will doubtless later be revealed as indispensable. Otherwise the characters are a joy: Swelter, Flay, the Prunesquallors, Steerpike, Barquentine, the Countess, and not least the thwarted and deluded twins, Cora and Clarice. ("I like roofs," said Clarice; "they are something I like more than most things because they are on top of the houses they cover, and Cora and I like being over the tops of things because we love power, and that's why we are both fond of roofs.") The book is also remarkable for its gigantic set-pieces of action. Steerpike's daylong climb over the great roofscape of Gormenghast, and the final conflict of Flay and Swelter in the Hall of Spiders, are magnificently thrilling.

Mr. William Sansom's early story, *The Wall*, is one of the best pieces of writing the war has occasioned, and his other stories about the fire-service have a curious intensity, a kind of solid poetry, which is Mr. Sansom's own especial gift. There, his tendency to circle at great length round the same point becomes a virtue; elsewhere it is a dull, laborious vice, as in his Kafka fantasies and allegories. There is one of these fantasies in the present volume, called *The Invited*. It seems to me as dull and leaden as anything Mr. Sansom has written. He has abundant imagination and inventiveness, yet somehow he persists in muffling and distorting them; his stories uncoil themselves lethargically, and where one expects a *tour de force*, the *tour de force* doesn't appear. Fortunately, *The Invited* is preceded by two other stories. One of them is a fresh, clear and glittering anecdote of fire-service life, in which the statement is made, I hope truthfully, that it is legal to call out a fire brigade to get a cat down out of a tree. The other is a new and successful departure from Mr. Sansom's methods hitherto: a long reverie of a floor-cleaner in a French café, as she goes about her morning's work. (It takes her from eleven to one to get the floor of the café done; and the café is moderately, or completely, full of people the whole time: *we order these things better in England.*) A story of small-town intrigue floats about above her head, and mingles with her memories and with her views of people's legs and of the floor which she is toiling her way across. Her sudden glimpses of the high-spots of the action are brilliantly done.

The Gipsy's Baby is a collection of five stories which have already appeared; taken separately, they are all rather slight, and it is clear that Miss Lehmann has no great interest in the short story as a form; together, they complement and light each other up, and they are executed with such grace and humour, such exquisitely exact observation, that one reads on through accounts of often trivial incidents, as Mr. Forster says he reads

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BASIL BLACKWELL

Jane Austen, with "the mouth open and the mind closed." The stories deal always with adult life seen through the eyes of accompanying children, or with childhood seen through the eyes of a parent. Miss Lehmann has already shown what she can do with the first of these themes, on a larger and more serious scale (and with the same children) in *The Ballad and the Source*; the latter theme is, I think, new to her, and she imparts the vision with a curious astringent poignancy threaded through her fluent humour. In the first story she mentions E. Nesbit, the delightful author of *The Treasure Seekers*; Miss Lehmann herself shares E. Nesbit's gift of avoiding mushiness in presenting children; and of showing without evasion the dreadful and barely bridgeable gulf between children of different classes.

In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, a novelist who comes to us with the blessing of Mr. Edmund Wilson, does what Mr. Maugham has done in one way or another several times already. He attempts to reconstruct the life of an imaginary famous artist, who has been misrepresented by another biographer. He collects material here and there, and unfolds his version with a cunning casualness. Unfortunately, neither Sebastian nor the other characters comes to life, and the amount of incident in the book is extraordinarily small. And though the outlines of Sebastian's books are engaging, the specimens of his prose which Mr. Nabokov is daring enough to show us do not suggest a great writer. Nevertheless there are good things in the book, among them the scenes where the writer tracks down Sebastian's last love; and one feels curiosity about Mr. Nabokov's other novels, several of which apparently exist in Russian. HENRY REED

GRAMOPHONE NOTES

STRAUSS: *Till Eulenspiegel.* Boston Symphony Orch., cond. Koussevitzky (H.M.V. DB6267–8).

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WOLF: *Italian Serenade.* Philharmonia Orch., cond. Süsskind (Col. DX 1236).

DVOŘÁK: *Carneval Overture.* City of Birmingham Orch., cond. Weldon (Col. DX1235).

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WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolde: Prelude to Act 1 and Isolde's Narrative: Prelude to Act 3 and Liebestod.* Helen Traubel with Philharmonic Symphony Orch. of New York, cond. Rodzinski (Col. LX941–5).

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MOZART: *Das Veilchen*, and

SCHUBERT: *Dass sie hier gewesen.* Elisabeth Schumann, acc. Gerald Moore (H.M.V. DA1854).

VERDI: *Rigoletto: Questa e Quella*, and

VERDI: *Un Ballo in Maschera: Di' tu se fedele.* Jussi Björling with Orch. (H.M.V. DA1837).

MOUSSORGSKY: *The Song of the Flea*, and

KOENEMAN: *When the King went to War.* Marian Nowakowski, with London Symphony Orch., cond. Warwick Braithwaite (Decca K1172).

VERDI: *La Traviata: How Wondrous!* Joan Hammond with Philharmonia Orch., cond. Süsskind (H.M.V. C3486).

HAYDN: *The Seasons: O How Pleasing to the Senses*, and

PURCELL: *Faery Queene: Hark the Echoing Air.* Isobel Baillie, with Hallé Orch., cond. Heward (Col. DX1234).

BALAKIREV: *Rêverie* and *Mazurka No. 6 in A flat.* Louis Kentner (Col. DX1237).

ALBENIZ: *Granada*, and

GRANADOS: *Tonadilla.* Andres Segovia (guitar). (Brunswick 0159).

CHOPIN: *Polonaise in B flat, op. 71 No. 2*, and

DEBUSSY: *Clair de Lune.* Moiseiwitsch (H.M.V. C3485).

FALLA: *El Amor Brujo: Ritual Fire Dance* and *Dance of Terror.* Jose Iturbi (H.M.V. DA1853).

RAVEL: *Habañera*, and

DVOŘÁK: *Humoresque.* Heifetz (Brunswick 03617).

The new set of *Till* represents American recording at its very best. There are moments in the score when the extreme resonance of the studio is a disadvantage; but on the whole this is a fault on the right side and contributes, most of the time, to a sparkling and individual interpretation of a masterpiece. Individual chiefly in the matter of tempi, some of which are slower than has been usual; but Koussevitzky's moments of special deliberation—for instance, during Till's final fling—serve to clarify the outlines of this acrobatic score. The old Busch recording is still very good, but I think there is no doubt that in the new issue the orchestral perspective is sharper and the tone-colour more distinctive. In one respect, however, both versions seem to me to fall short of perfection: the Epilogue is too plainly phrased to express—as it is meant to do—the rascal who was really not so bad at heart.

There are times when the eclecticism of even the most eclectic composers seems a little mad. Saint-Saëns was a prodigiously clever man; but one presumes to wonder why he should have thought fit to marry a Bach organ fantasia to the most domestic type of Schumann, within the limits of a single movement. The result is peculiar, to say the least of it; and the impression of aimlessness is not redressed when the composer tops up a Scherzo in six-eight with a quite remarkably vacuous Finale in Tarantella rhythm. Both formally and stylistically, then, this concerto is a mess; but the musical public seems long ago to have decided to prefer it to Saint-Saëns' much finer and more consistent Fourth Concerto. Miss Lympany deals with the solo part in the right spirit of bombast combined with technical brilliance; but the recording, though at times very good indeed, tends to become shrill and confused in the *tutti*. When Decca succeed in achieving a treble as agreeable and rounded as the bass, in this set, is fine and sonorous, their issues may well become the best on the market. The second Saint-Saëns item on my list has the same faults of recording as the first, and many people may continue to prefer the old Heifetz disc. This piece is of course jam for any violinist, and Miss Haendel does not fail to wring the maximum of effect out of the Rondo, which paints a comic picture of an overdressed personage, somewhat the worse for drink, attempting to descend a grand staircase with dignity.

Some confusion exists on the subject of Wolf's exquisite *Italian Serenade*. L. H. Haward, writing in *Grove*, describes the work as "a charming Italienische Serenade for string-orchestra, which was a later version of an early string quartet." On the other hand, Ernest Decsey, who knew Wolf personally, speaks of the well-known string *quartet* version as being "only an arrangement" of the original composition "for small orchestra." While believing the latter to be the true statement of the case, I would be grateful if some reader could give me positive information. In any case the orchestral version (edited by Max Reger) is entirely delightful, and though it may be felt to lack some of the southern airiness and delicacy of the quartet arrangement, it cannot be denied that the addition of wind instruments gives more colour to the whole, and here and there characterises certain phrases in what seems a

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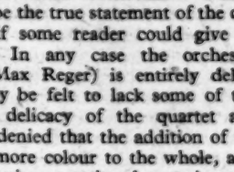

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necessary manner. This is a most admirable record, from every point of view: the tempo is exactly right, the performance crisp and nicely balanced.

Both the Dvořák Overture and the *Eugen Onegin* excerpts compare very favourably with former recordings. The Dvořák suffers, in the rumbustious passages at the beginning and end, from insufficiency of strings, which makes the brass writing sound very coarse; but the quiet central section comes off beautifully and the conductor has caught to perfection the gaiety and freshness of the whole conception. The Beecham disc seems to me the best of his recent recordings.

Baraza is film music, of a superior kind, it is true, but hardly attractive enough as music to deserve a separate recording. The material sounds as if it had been put together from rejected sketches for the composer's Piano Concerto, and the texture is rendered insupportably muddy by the addition of the chorus. The quiet section on side 2 provides a few moments of agreeable improvisation.

Unsatisfactory as it is in many important respects, the *Tristan* album must be welcomed for the opportunity it gives of hearing a dramatic soprano whose voice must be unknown to the majority of people in this country. Miss Traubel is the possessor of a magnificent organ and a fine Wagnerian technique. She has not perhaps quite the majesty and variety and command of emotion that distinguished Frieda Leider at the summit of her career; but her singing is in the grand manner and she delivers Isolde's curse with all the controlled violence this tremendous passage requires. More's the pity, then, that the American recording company should have thought fit to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar, by omitting altogether the voice of Brangaene, who has a few but essential lines to contribute. The cuts spoil the sweep of the music, and at one point, where the voice part is simply omitted, the orchestral accompaniment sounds particularly lame by itself. The Prelude to Act 1 is very finely played; but both here and in the Prelude to Act 3 the orchestral tone is not allowed nearly enough space, so that the general effect is stringy and the climaxes are robbed of their vehemence. Nor can I agree with some of my colleagues that the Cor Anglais solo is well played: it seems to me singularly ill-phrased, though the tone is good. The drum roll at the end of the Prelude to Act 1 is inaudible, and the wonderful octave passage for cellos and basses, which ushers in the first scene, sounds far too dim. Yet, with all its faults, this set is not negligible.

Aksel Schiotz is a tasteful and sensitive singer and his set of the *Dichterliebe* supplies a felt need, since the Panzéra issue, though I think it reaches deeper into the spirit of the songs, is much less well recorded. The balance in the new set is ideal, the phrasing of both pianist and singer impeccable; but, at any rate in the first half of the cycle, Mr. Schiotz seems rather inhibited. After all, these lovely songs are plumb in the middle of the romantic style, and a great deal of their beauty and pathos is lost if they are as carefully under-expressed as this. Schumann ought never to be performed in too sober a manner. Still, after a slight initial sense of disappointment, this set proves well worth having.

Like Grieg, Poulenc is at his best in short lyric forms, and at least three of these latest songs of his display his elegant gifts to admirable advantage. I doubt if they will wear very well, but on occasion their opalescent harmonies, and their slightly overripe pathos, cannot fail to charm. They are, of course, perfectly performed and the recording is felicitous.

Das Veilchen is usually considered the prototype of the German *Lied*, and deliciously pretty it is, if we agree to ignore the rococo fatuity of Goethe's verses, which date from the early 1770's. "*Dass sie hier gewesen*" is a much more serious affair, outstanding in depth and expressiveness even among Schubert's songs. Constructed in a "symphonic" manner which looks forward to the style of Hugo Wolf, this most uncommon song deserves to be more widely known than it is. Though it is perhaps possible to detect the signs of age in Mme Schumann's voice, she continues to record with extraordinary purity of style and sweetness of tone. Neither of these qualities are discernible in Miss Joan Hammond's performance of "Ah! fors' è lui." In fact this record is a dismal example of the indifference of our age to the great Italian tradition of operatic singing. That this is not a mere question of nationality is shown by the Björling disc. The Swedish tenor commands, to a remarkable degree, the Italian approach to this kind of music; and his voice is here much more faithfully recorded than in the recently issued aria from *Turandot*.

Mr. Nowakowski is something of a discovery. He possesses a rich bass of genuinely musical quality, as well as a buffo style which, although of course it owes a good deal to the example of Chaliapin, has plenty of individuality. The varieties of his laughter, in which the *Song of the Flea* depends for its comic effect, are astonishing. It seems a pity to have halved the value of this well-recorded disc by so dull and worthless a piece of pomposity as *When the King went to War*.

Haydn's lovely air might have been still more pleasing to the senses if only the microphone could somehow be prevented from imparting a "sting" to Miss Baillie's high notes.

I can confidently recommend Mr. Kentner's new record to musical people whose taste is not too severe. The *Rêverie* has a charming melody richly embroidered in the Lisztian manner; the *Mazurka*, besides being marvellously written for the instrument, has a rhythmical catch which will be of interest to Jazz experts. The playing is faultless and the recording particularly easy on the ear. M. Segovia needs no recommendation at this time of day, and though it must be some time since we heard him in the flesh in this country, his mastery of that fascinating and resourceful instrument, the guitar, seems as great as ever. Yet the pieces he has chosen to record on this occasion are of slender interest, compared with the great quantity of Spanish music written for the guitar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which we are never given a chance to hear.

Mr. Moiseiwitsch's record is, from the point of view of performance, one of the best he has made for some time. The *Polonaise* (a posthumous one, musically rather thin) is played with point and delicacy, and although not much remains to be done with Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, the faded but genuine beauty of this early piece of Impressionism is faithfully recorded. On the other hand, I can find nothing good to say of the Iturbi disc. Wrested from their context in the ballet, these dances quickly become tedious; and the recording is shallow and unpleasant.

Heifetz's playing of Ravel's diaphanous *Habañera* is inferior in feeling, though not in execution, to Menuhin's already famous record. Such duplication is pointless; and in any case why has this great violinist taken lately to wasting his time on trifles, instead of continuing to record the masterpieces which he is so well fitted to interpret?

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

Week-end Competitions

No. 849

Set by William Whitebait

A writer in the *Manchester Guardian* related the other day how he had been approached in Bond Street by a policeman who asked him the time. Competitors are asked to submit a set of three similar anecdotes indicative of the period we live in. Entries by May 14.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 846

Set by G. W. Stonier

The London Zoo has sent to Prague, as a gesture of friendship, two wallabies. Competitors are asked to suggest similar presents, friendly or unfriendly,

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